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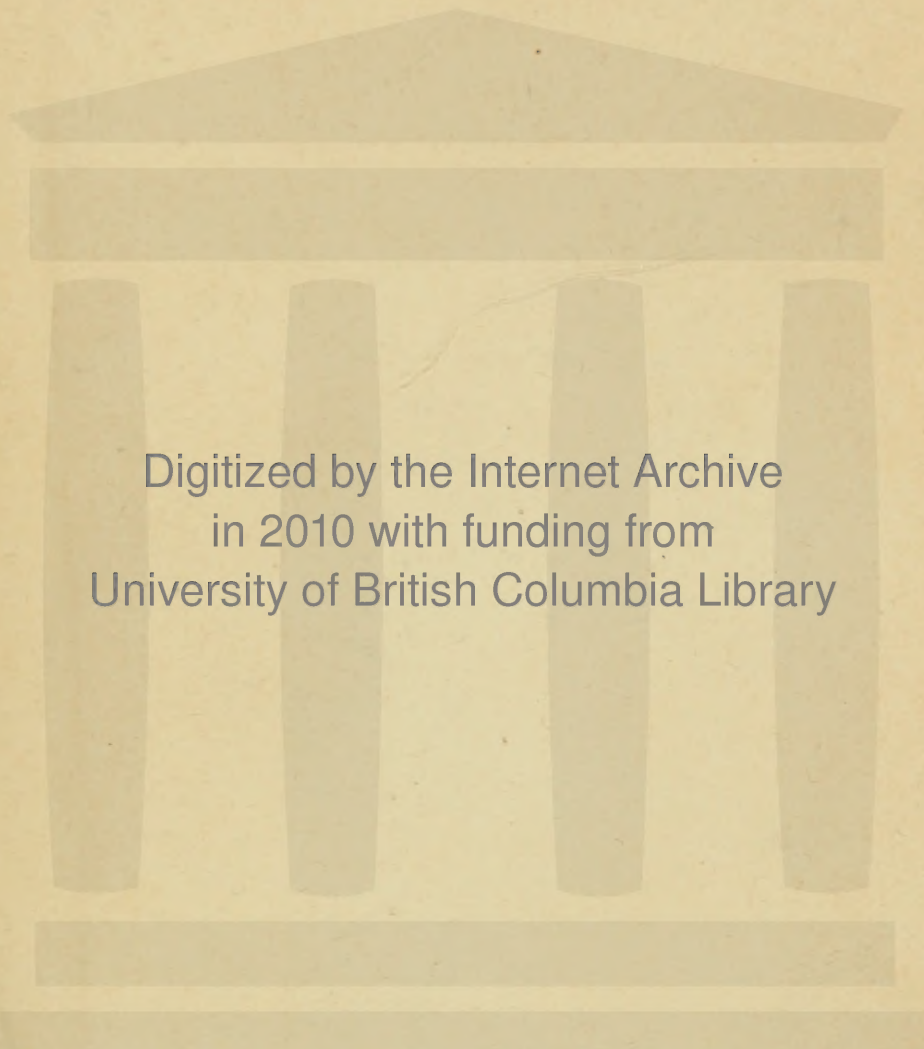
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THE STANDARD OF LIFE



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THE  
STANDARD OF LIFE

AND OTHER REPRINTED ESSAYS

BY  
HELEN BOSANQUET

London  
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1906

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*First Edition, 1898*  
*Second Edition, 1906*

## PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

IN preparing a new edition of the *Standard of Life* I have added to it some Essays which were originally published in a book now out of print—*Aspects of the Social Problem*. Had there been any chance of its being republished, I should have preferred to leave them where they were; but they will not, I think, be found irrelevant in this present context.

HELEN BOSANQUET.

OXSHOTT, *March* 1906.



## PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION

NEARLY every one to-day is interested in questions of social welfare, and more especially in industrial questions. But for those who have not had a preliminary training in economics it is sometimes difficult to follow the course of events in the industrial world, and to understand the explanations offered of those events. I have therefore attempted in the first of these studies to bring together in a simple form some of the more fundamental economic ideas, and to show their application in the questions which come before us day by day. More especially I have wished to emphasise the importance, and to explain the actual working of the Standard of Life as the basis of economic progress.

The subsequent studies are of a more detailed character, and are offered as a small contribution towards the research for which such a large field lies open to the student of social phenomena. I believe that even such detached studies, if faithfully made, may be of use in promoting a better understanding

of the conditions under which we live. Some of these have been published before, and I have to thank the Editors of the *Journal of Economics*, the *International Journal of Ethics*, and the *Charity Organisation Review* for their kind permission to reproduce them here.

As a conclusion I have ventured to add a translation of a passage from Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, which seems to me to contain guidance for social reformers as appropriate now as it was two thousand years ago.

CATERHAM-ON-THE-HILL,

May 20, 1898.

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# I

## THE STANDARD OF LIFE

### I

IF any proof were wanted of how ideas may mould the lives of men and be the moving spirit of their progress, we might surely find it in this deeply significant idea of the Standard of Life. Around it centre most of our industrial problems of to-day, and more or less consciously it is made the base for all the forward movements of the working-class. And like all living ideas it is incapable of exact definition; in other words, its significance is inexhaustible, for it has not yet become stereotyped into one narrow usage. It may be taken to include all that is best and highest in human life, or it may be narrowed down to signify nothing more than the satisfaction of the crudest cravings of mankind; and its very elasticity gives it a deeper significance, for by the interpretation which he gives to it you may most surely know the man for what he is.

But though we cannot define the idea, we can, by considering its varying usages, and the part which it plays in our own thought and life, form some

estimate of its importance, and perhaps lay emphasis on elements which are too liable to be overlooked.

In the first place, we may consider in what sort of sense we are justified in speaking of a standard in this connection.

Behind the fountains and lions in Trafalgar Square is a stone wall, and in this stone wall is something so important that it is hardly ever looked at, and perhaps the majority of Londoners do not even know that it is there. To get at it you must pass behind the seats full of languid, uncleanly tramps and loafers, perhaps move aside a group of playing children, and then you will find certain pieces of metal let into the stone, and marking off lengths which are named as inches, feet, yards, and furlongs. This is the standard of measurement, by which is determined what length shall be called an inch or a foot, and beyond which there is no appeal. Such a standard is an absolute necessity as one of the fundamental ideas upon which civilised intercourse is based; without it there would be nothing to prevent any person from having his own idea as to what sort of length a yard should be; we might revert to the rough and ready method, still in use where great accuracy is not required, of measuring from the outstretched hand to the tip of the nose; but this becomes unsatisfactory as soon as divergent interests come into play. As it is, any one who doubts the accuracy of his tape-measure or foot-rule need but take it and lay it against the standard, to assure himself whether or not it is leading him astray.

But, as I have said, this standard is seldom if ever referred to, and most people do not know that it is there. It is a matter of such fundamental importance, and one which enters so deeply into our lives, that every one either carries about with him his own pocket-measure, or has it handy for reference in a particular drawer, while not one in a thousand thinks of questioning the accuracy of his measure. Nor, indeed, is there any necessity to do so. There would be no gain in falsifying the measures sold to private persons, and the motive to tradespeople to have fraudulent measures is so strong that the State provides inspectors to guard against it.

The necessity of a standard is not confined to the commonplace facts of weighing and measuring. The tuning-fork of the singing-master sets a standard to which his pupils must conform, and without which he would himself fall into uncertainty; while in the ten commandments we have a standard of morality which has served the human race for countless generations.

How is it with the Standard of Life? It may be objected that this is something too vague and indefinite to be really analogous to these; that there is nowhere any definite statement laid down to which we can appeal, and that it is merely a picturesque way of saying that a man ought not to live like an animal, or some other rhetorical phrase of the kind.

It is true, no doubt, that many of us do not know where to look for our standard, and should be puzzled if suddenly called upon to define it. But

this is partly again because it is so important a matter that those who have any standard at all have no need to refer elsewhere; it has become a part of their very lives, and consciously or unconsciously they measure their every action by it. What else does it mean when we say, "I can't live in that street, it is too dirty and disreputable," or, "I wouldn't turn out a piece of work in that disgraceful state," or, "I couldn't bring myself to such a low trick as that," or, "I'd be ashamed to let my children run the streets in that condition"? Or when, again, we so order our lives that the ease and pleasure in them shall not become disproportionate to the amount of toil and exertion? We are simply measuring certain facts by a standard which we have within us of decent living, good work, honesty, family pride, and strenuousness; and it would not be difficult for any thoughtful man to make clear to himself just what the sort of life was which he had taken as a standard. And he would then find that just so far as he fell below that standard he would consider his life unsatisfactory and a failure.

The great difference between the Standard of Life and other standards seems at first sight to be, that while physical standards are the same for all, the standard of life varies for each of us. But this is largely only appearance, and due to our narrow way of regarding the standard. When we take it in a larger sense, we begin to see that the difficulty is not

so much that for each of us it is different, but that for all of us it is progressive.

For instance, one way of narrowing the idea is to use it as if it could be expressed in money terms alone, and to speak of the standard of any class as represented by 20s., 30s., or 40s. a week, as the case may be. Then we are apt to fall into the error of saying that the standard of such a class is high or low merely according to its money earnings, thus omitting all reference to the more important matters which are not to be obtained by money. And yet we should know that there may be a far higher Standard of Life where money is scarce than where it is abundant. I have just received a striking confirmation of this in a publication entitled *Daily Record of my Physical, Moral, and Intellectual Development*; it consists of a number of blank schedules for me to fill up with my daily virtues, and is preceded by a specimen page which we may fairly take to represent the standard desired. It is as follows :

---

Will . . .	Resisted impatience twice.
Sympathy. . .	Visited a friend in sorrow.
Moral sense . . .	Answered two letters although I did not feel like it.
Understanding . . .	Studied a chapter on biology.
Memory . . .	Learned by heart ten lines of Tennyson, and read carefully two pages of a foreign author.
Physical exercise . . .	Played tennis (one hour).
Æsthetical sentiment . . .	Admired a beautiful sunset.

---

It is at once obvious that those who devised this extraordinary recipe for making a prig have in most,

if not all respects, a much lower standard than that of any self-respecting artisan who gives good work in return for his maintenance, and devotes himself to the welfare of his family, his trade, or his fellow-workers, instead of brooding over his own virtues.

Another way of simplifying the question is to divide the community up into social classes, and assign a different standard to each class ; and for this view there is a certain justification if we look rather to the probable origin of class distinctions than to the facts as they stand at present. For it seems likely that class distinctions have their origin in differences of function, and that our Standard of Life differs in detail according to the particular function we have to fulfil in the community. In other words, according to the occupations which they follow men's standards will vary in kind, without our being necessarily able to say that this or the other is the higher or lower. If for the present we leave out of sight the lowest class of all, the Residuum (which is the Residuum just because it is made up of men and women who have lost their standard), then we shall find that in certain fundamental respects the standard is the same for all Englishmen to-day. For instance, in cleanliness, morality, and sufficiency of food, we differ no doubt from person to person ; but we could not fairly say that on the whole it is characteristic of any one class to be cleaner, more moral, or to eat more than any other. But as soon as we get away from these elementary facts, great divergencies begin to appear, and those differences begin to show them-

selves which seem to coincide with what we are apt to call class distinctions. The most obvious differences between classes, those which at once attract the attention to the exclusion of underlying identities, consist in their different standards in such matters as dress, education, housing, and recreation. Certain classes appear to attach much more importance to these, and at any rate spend much more money upon them; and we incline, perhaps somewhat hastily, to assume that the more expensive standard must be the higher.

The attempt to understand these differences in the standard brings us into contact with some of the most perplexing problems of sociology. The first which stares us in the face is one which has baffled so many young inquirers that it may fairly be called the Pons Asinorum of social reform. Why are there different classes in the community? Why do we not all belong to one class, with one standard of life and equal means of attaining it? This is one of the first questions we begin to ask upon emerging from the sublime indifference of childhood to all social arrangements, and one which nobody seems prepared to answer for us. Fortunately for our present purpose no comprehensive answer is needed; it will be sufficient to note briefly one or two of the considerations involved in our social inequalities.

And first as to the connection between class distinctions and difference of social function. History does not tell us whether there was ever a time in which all men were equal, but we do seem to find that,

broadly speaking, the differentiation of society into classes has followed the lines of its differentiation into different functions or employments. Leaving out the disturbing influence of conquest, we see that the general lines of division between classes coincide with the general lines of division between function in the community. One strong instance of this we find in the feudal system, under which the distinctions between classes and employments were strongly marked, and which is defined as meaning "property held as a reward or in consideration of special services." The propertied class was then, theoretically at least, the class which rendered special service to the State; and, speaking broadly, both the property and responsibility were hereditary.

Again, it is worth noticing that our so-called "middle class" is of comparatively modern growth, and corresponds to a development of the professions and of the organising branches of industry.

But the most marked illustration of the coincidence of class and employment is to be seen where we find the social arrangement known as *caste*. The essence of *caste*, apart from its religious significance, is, that certain functions are committed to certain classes, and that these functions are to a greater or less extent hereditary, so that members of the same family continue to follow the same occupation from generation to generation.

We may say then, that in the past at any rate difference of class has largely depended upon difference of function or employment.

Now if we could find a society in which every one followed the same employment, and in which there was also no distinction of classes, we should have a striking corroboration of the view that the two depend upon each other. A society with literally *no* difference of employment would perhaps be an impossibility, but we get as near to it as we can in the modern state of Bulgaria. The people of Bulgaria are essentially a race of peasant proprietors, and form a society which is almost homogeneous. The one exceptional class is that of the State officials, the civil service; but this service is itself recruited from the peasant class and shares its characteristics. With this one exception there seems to be no opening whatever for educated people, and the question has been seriously raised, whether it is of any use to educate, beyond the most elementary stage, boys who have nothing before them but the career of the professional politician or the meagre life of the peasant. What that life is we may gather from the following extract from Dicey's *The Peasant State*:

“The agent of a number of English mercantile firms complained to me recently that he found it impossible to push business in the Principality. When asked for the reason of his failure, his explanation was that the great mass of the people had absolutely no wants which they could not satisfy for themselves. The Bulgarian peasant needs extremely little, and that little he provides from the produce of his own land. The average cost of a peasant's daily sustenance does not exceed twopence. Their food, during the greater

part of the year, consists solely of bread and garlic. Their only beverage is water ; not that they have any objection to beer or spirits, but because they object to paying for them. Sheep-skins, provided in most cases from their own flocks, form the universal dress of the peasantry. The clothes, both of men and women, are generally home-made. Commonly they only possess one suit, and they sleep at night in the same clothes as those which they wear during the day. Their beds are mattresses laid on the mud floors of the rooms where they have their meals. On these mattresses the whole family lie huddled together. Even in the towns separate bedrooms are almost unknown. The servants sleep on rugs in the kitchen, and their masters and mistresses are lodged in a way any English artisan, earning good wages, would regard as intolerable. . . . The necessities of existence lie within their own reach ; but as yet they have not a wish for its luxuries. Their daily lives are so laborious, so rough, and so penurious, that they even contrive to lay by money. When they have laid it by, they have no idea of spending it so as to improve the conditions under which they live. Their one dominant passion is the hunger for land, and if a peasant sees his way to add an acre or two to his patrimony, he will part with his savings for the purpose."

It seems clear, then, that without going so far as to say that differences of employment are the cause of class distinction, or *vice versâ*, we are safe in assuming that there is some close connection between them, and

that a society which lacks the one is likely to be deficient in the other.

Perhaps the most important characteristic in which we differ from more ancient forms of society lies in the fact that functions and employments are no longer hereditary in any strict sense of the term. It will of course always remain natural that, other things being equal, a father should teach his son his own trade; and thus there will always be a tendency for families to continue in the same employment. But there is no longer any artificial barrier erected by tradition and custom, and it is possible for any boy on leaving school, if his intelligence is not below the average, to choose among a dozen different occupations. This possibility of choice, *i.e.* of adapting the occupation of the boy to his individual disposition and capacity, instead of forcing him into the same groove as his ancestors, is of the utmost importance. Plato laid stress upon it in his conception of the ideal State, which was to be organised as a system of classes, based upon difference of function, wherein each man was to do that which he was best fitted by nature to do.

There is probably no way in which it can be ensured beyond fail, that a man shall do what he is best fitted to do; some spend their lives in looking for their vocation and die without finding it. But it is clear that all will have a better chance in a complex society offering many different openings, than in a simpler one such as Bulgaria, where all members are more on a level, and where there is little variety offered. We find a similar contrast between developed countries

with fully differentiated occupations, and new countries where there is as yet little demand for anything but manual labour. In the latter there is no career for the weakly or intellectual; those whose nature and disposition might have found full satisfaction elsewhere, are in a double sense "out of place" in a primitive society.

And together with this opening up of employments to all the members of a community, we find the simultaneous process going on of the breaking down of class barriers. There are no longer any insuperable chasms between classes, but each class melts by indistinguishable degrees into that above and that below. We should not be far wrong in saying that the number of "social classes" in England to-day is almost as great as the number of different employments, and that it is possible for a man to choose to what class he or his son will belong, in about the same degree that it is possible for him to choose their kind of employment. There is now nothing in the nature of the case to prevent, *e.g.* an artisan from giving his son an education which will enable him ultimately to enter the ranks of the professions.

This means of course an immense widening to the scope of ambition. Professor Cunningham points out<sup>1</sup> that the old burgess society "had this striking characteristic, that the ordinary object of ambition was not so much that of rising out of one's grade, but of standing well in that grade; the citizen did not aim at being a knight, but at being warden and master of

<sup>1</sup> *Growth of English Industry and Commerce*, p. 410.

his gild, or alderman and mayor of his town. For good or for evil we have but little sympathy with these humble ambitions; every one desires to rise in the world himself, and the philanthropic construct social ladders by which the poorest child may rise to the highest ranks, as was done by ecclesiastics in the middle ages."

That this breaking down of artificial barriers must in the long run be for good, we can hardly doubt. Man is naturally progressive, both in his wants and in his aspirations; and by the very law of his being, must always—if only left to himself—be seeking after new interests, new plans, new ambitions. But if no interests are there, if the means to carry out his plans are wanting, if his ambitions are thwarted and held in check by custom and tradition, he will never break through the lower circle of desires and satisfactions, which we share with the brutes, and progress will be impossible.

In this progressiveness of the human being we find one reason for those differences in the Standard of Life which we are trying to understand. Not all have yet worked out their freedom from the lower range of desires; for these, satisfaction of the appetites means only renewed opportunity for the repeated satisfaction of the appetites. Of those again who have set their hopes on pressing forward, who see before them a universe of desirable things to be mastered, some have outstripped others and lead the way. In their advance lies the chief hope for those behind: the sight of better things attainable is the chief spur to men to raise

their own standard, to seek for themselves and their children advantages for which they would otherwise care nothing.

Another reason for differences in the standard, and one still more in the nature of things than the former, is to be found in the different conditions under which varying kinds of work must be carried on. The scholar eats much less than the artisan who goes through great physical exertion, but he needs instead greater warmth and quiet ; just as their tools must always be different, steel and iron for the one and books for the other, so also their standards must differ in kind as regards the surroundings in which they live. That one or the other may cost more in terms of money is a matter of accident, and may indeed tell hardly upon the one who is generally supposed to be in the better position. The young clerk, who earns no more than the artisan, but must wear a black coat ; and the governess, whose scanty earnings must provide evening dress, know well enough that the difference in the standard is not in their favour ; but the obligation to "dress according" is one which is fully recognised by the working-class, and will always be accepted as a reason why John the clerk should contribute less to the family expenses than Tom the carpenter.

In the mere fact, then, of differences of standard, apart from accidental accompaniments of which we may hope in time to free ourselves, we have both the condition and consequence of vitality and progress in [a nation ; and indeed we find that what really

practical reformers are working for is not to bring about greater uniformity, but to get rid of certain definite disadvantages to which people of certain classes or occupations are subjected. For instance, we have not yet attained that ideal "equality of opportunity," which would make it possible for every man to do what he is most fitted for; but we are perhaps nearer to it than any nation has ever been. In what direction must we work to help on the advent of this ideal? In the first place I think, we must do our part towards ensuring that every one is fitted for something, for if a man is good for nothing it is beside the mark to talk about his opportunities. And in the second place, we must see that boys and girls on leaving school have alternatives fairly placed before them. That is the work of parents, it will be objected, and I quite agree; the greater part of the training of our citizens is the work of parents, and can be done by no one else so well. But if parents are slow, as they sometimes are, to see the importance of a careful choice of occupations for their children, a great deal can be done by school managers and others to awaken them to a sense of responsibility in this direction. And as regards the kind of education which is best adapted to fit children for life, it is now open to every one to make his influence felt; if in no other way, yet still as an elector.

Again, in the bad conditions under which certain of the wage-earning class carry on their occupations, including too long hours and insufficient pay, we have a circumstance horrible in itself, and in no way

essential to the nature of our society, which the whole community is interested in abolishing. But here the efforts of the community can only be effectual in so far as they are accompanied by a raising of the standard of life of the particular class concerned.

But before proceeding to consider the economic influence of the standard more in detail it is important to note, that out of the differences of standard and of function have arisen certain class prejudices which are the source of more injustice and stand more in the way of progress than any merely economic inequalities. In the first place, there is the prejudice which assumes a difference of nature between the "working-class" in the ordinary usage of the term, and other members of the community. This, strangely enough, is apt to come out most clearly in the attitude of benevolent philanthropists, but it is probably latent in many others, who only do not manifest it because they are not interested in any one outside their immediate circle. It shows itself in speaking and thinking of the whole class of "poor" people as childish, or dependent, or as incapable of planning for themselves a desirable life and living it—in other words, of choosing and maintaining a Standard of Life; and the philanthropy based upon this prejudice takes the form of endeavouring to regulate the life of the poor for them on lines which it thinks suitable to an inferior class. In this way the low standard gets stereotyped, and a wiser philanthropy recognises that if this class is to put away childish things and rise to the full dignity of self-respecting

manhood, we must cease to treat it as childish and incapable. We may of course allow that the working-classes have disadvantages to contend against, and we may give them every help in our power; but we must in common justice recognise this power of determining their own standard of life and of working towards it in their own way. In other words, we must get rid of the prejudice which leads us to misquote the Prayer-book, as instructing us to do our duty in that station of life to which God *has* called us, instead of *shall* call us.

This does not mean that if, after really *understanding* the standard of another person, we honestly think our own a higher one, we are not to endeavour to educate him up to it; but this is a very different thing from acquiescing in a low standard for another which we would not accept for ourselves.

This prejudice has its economic aspect in another superstition which has grown up out of untrue distinctions; the superstition that there is a natural enmity between classes engaged in production; an inevitable antagonism between the so-called capitalist and wage-earner. As I maintain in a later essay, the distinctions are not true to the facts of our modern society, and what hostility there is has its roots rather in misrepresentation and misunderstanding than in reality.

Before proceeding to consider the more purely economic aspect of the Standard of Life, I will pause to sum up briefly:

1. Every man (above the lowest Residuum) has a

Standard of Life, by which, consciously or unconsciously, he orders his life, and estimates its success or failure.

2. The standard in England of to-day is the same for all to a certain extent, and in certain fundamental but less obvious facts ; but it is essentially progressive, and in more obvious ways it varies greatly from class to class, and according to differences of occupation.

3. These differences do not involve any essential incapacity on the part of any class to raise and maintain its own standard, and therefore every class, as every individual, has both the right and the duty to fix its standard as high as it can attain, there being no limits which are more proper for one class than another.

4. The well-being, moral and economic, of any man or class will be for the most part determined by the standard which he accepts, and for this reason we might formulate this practical ideal for individuals : That every man should aim at giving his children at least as high a standard as his own, and as good an opportunity of realising it. And that this is not an unnecessary matter to urge, may be witnessed by the fact that large numbers of our very poor are unskilled labourers whose fathers were skilled artisans.

## II

I have already referred to a characteristic which emphatically distinguishes man from the lower

animals; *i.e.* the fact that when he has once broken through the circle of the more elementary desires and satisfactions, he is by nature progressive and incapable of permanent satisfaction. It is this characteristic which lends importance to the distinction which has been made between the Standard of Life and the Standard of Comfort. There is nothing essentially progressive in comfort; indeed if it has been attained before wider interests have been aroused, it may prove to be a more insuperable barrier to progress than poverty itself. One great demerit of the public-house is, that it makes its frequenters comfortable for the time, without arousing a desire for anything more than a speedy return. (Not that *mere* discomfort is enough. Lockhart's cocoa-rooms, with their bare trestles and sawdusted floors, are indeed less satisfying than the public-house to the lower life, but then they afford no more stimulus to the higher.) A sufficiency of food, again, may only act upon us as it does upon the well-fed dog, which curls up before the fire in happy sleep until it is time for another meal. But to the man who is interested, say in his co-operative society, a good meal gives refreshment and strength to attend an evening meeting, and once there he may be stimulated to join the education committee, and that again will bring him into contact with new intellectual and administrative interests one after the other, until he laments with secret satisfaction that there is no end to the work, and he never has a moment to himself.

Believing then that the Standard of Life in

England is essentially and not only accidentally progressive, we will avoid using the word "comfort" with its implications of satisfied quiescence. "Let us take the term the Standard of Life to mean the Standard of Activities and Wants. Thus an increase in the Standard of Life implies an increase of intelligence and energy and self-respect; leading to more care and judgment in expenditure, and an avoidance of food and drink that gratify the appetite but afford no strength, and of ways of living that are unwholesome physically and morally."<sup>1</sup>

Taking the Standard of Life in this higher sense, what is its relation to the "Living Wage," of which we hear so much? The connection between the two is very close, but we must be careful not to lose sight of the fact that a standard which is at all advanced, indeed we may say *any* standard in England to-day, includes many things which cannot be bought by the money of the individual, and that therefore an advance in wages can never be more than one element in social progress.

The term Living Wage itself demands some attention, for it clearly does not mean only what it says, a wage upon which it is possible to live. When the miners *e.g.* asked for a living wage, they meant something more than the minimum necessary to keep them alive. A man *can* live upon 5s. a week in London, but, as the poor themselves will quaintly say, this is "not living, it's only existing." And if we consider what they mean by the distinction, it

<sup>1</sup> Professor Marshall, *Principle of Economics*, p. 738.

comes to this, that upon such an income you can maintain no standard.

We may define the Living Wage as the least upon which the man can live and maintain the standard which he has set before himself as necessary to his leading a satisfactory life. Is it possible to say what that standard should include?

Individually of course every man must ultimately be the judge of how high a life he will aim at; but to deliberately determine one's own standard is a large part of the art of living, and comparatively few people have mastered this art. Many of us let ourselves be guided entirely by the custom of the class and time into which we are born, and just to that extent our standard tends to be rather a safeguard to prevent us from falling than a progressive force pushing us onwards. But without seeming to limit the individual's right of progress, we can indicate what is the minimum that the standard should include from a public point of view. It is clear that if the community is to derive valuable services from its members, they must be efficient, both in mind and body, and they must either possess or have access to the implements, tools, books, machinery, etc., which are necessary to the carrying on of their work. We shall see later on that this efficiency of mind, body, and conditions cannot be ensured to any class until it is included in the standard definitely accepted by the individuals of that class and maintained by their own exertions.

What at any time the standard accepted *does in-*

clude is, we have said, largely a matter of custom, and may then have little reference to the real needs of the individual. But where the standard is lower, not necessarily from a moral or social point of view, but in the sense of involving less expenditure, the wages will be found to keep proportionately low. This is strikingly illustrated by the difference between the wages of men and women. Women are supposed to be able to live on a much less wage than men of the same social standing, and this is largely because they accept a much lower standard of living. That is, they are content with less food, less comfort, narrower interests, and less recreation; and this reacts through their impaired vitality by making them less efficient. A widow will bring up two or three children on ten or twelve shillings a week and be considered by herself and others as fairly well off; a man in the same position will require at least double that amount, and then be accounted very poor. The children will probably be no better off in the latter case, but the man's fortunate selfishness will have kept him an efficient worker, while the woman will be a human wreck. "The woman needs less," it is always argued as a reason for woman's lower wages; but she needs less only in the sense that it costs less to maintain a low physical standard than a high one.

An exactly parallel difference of standard, depending on difference of custom, and resulting in difference of efficiency, is found between the wage-earners of different countries. We have already seen what a

low physical standard prevails among the Bulgarian peasantry, and an interesting article by Prof. Nitti on "The Food and Labour-Power of Nations,"<sup>1</sup> enables us to make a similar comparison with other nations. For instance, he tells us that "among the day labourers of the Italian Highlands the consumption of meat is practically *nil*, save on festivals, and wine is little drunk. Victuals consist of cereals (wheat, maize, and rice), peas and beans or other vegetables, seasoned with lard. The diet is one in which azote matter is stinted, and what there is is derived from vegetable substances rather than from animal food." And again: "According to the calculations of some writers, an average Italian workman consumes no more than about one-half the allowance of a Frenchman, and one-quarter that of an Englishman."

A similar difference in standard appears when we compare the diet of a United States labourer with that of a European. Prof. Nitti gives the following table:—

Commodity	100 representing quantity consumed in United States, the European workman consumes :
Meat . . . . .	33
Bacon (or fat) . . . . .	50
Eggs . . . . .	85
Butter . . . . .	100
Flour . . . . .	100
Potatoes . . . . .	175
Sugar . . . . .	25
Coffee . . . . .	85

As a result of his investigations, Prof. Nitti holds it proved that "In manufacture as in agriculture,

<sup>1</sup> *Economic Journal*, March 1896.

wherever energy is given out, the well-fed labourer proves superior to the under-fed. . . . The peoples of southern countries who, when under-fed, have not the habit of taking alcohol or other stimulating substances, call in the aid of repose, drowsiness, idleness, by the help of which they follow a regimen that would otherwise kill them. Eastern drowsiness, which sometimes looks like actual lethargy, and the drowsy idleness of the southerner are really never anything but the effects of insufficient nutrition. . . . An Englishman eats more and better than a German, he works more and better than a German; an American eats more and better than a German, or a Frenchman, or an Englishman, and works more and better than any of them."

What we learn, then, from inquiries such as these, is to aim at and encourage a high standard of nutrition for all classes alike; money spent in good wholesome food is gain not only to the individual who eats it, but to the whole community which profits by his services. We may learn a similar lesson from comparing the neglected children of the lowest classes with those children who are better cared for. It is said that the average Industrial Schoolboy is seven inches shorter and twenty-four and threequarter pounds lighter than the average boy of the same age. No doubt many causes combine to produce this startling result, but mal-nutrition must be one of the chief.

Moreover we are told that there is a direct physiological connection between mal-nutrition and the

craving for alcohol, which goes far to explain the prevalence of drinking amongst the very poor. The provoking part of the matter is that the money spent on alcohol would often be enough, with good management, to supply a really sufficient diet. It is the good management which is lacking, and that is a question of education and conviction. There was a perplexing confusion of cause and effect in the state of a woman who was sent to me as ill from want of food, and who proved upon inquiry to have been living for some days upon porter and tomatoes. Bad management of her income had led to insufficient diet, insufficient diet to a craving for drink, and the drink had not only left her without money, but had taken away her taste for good food. Amongst many of our poor, especially in the towns, poverty and drink act and react in this way; and we cannot break the knot either by giving food or cutting off the drink. We can only work indirectly through a rise in the standard of living.

That we have every reason to hope for such a rise we may see from the progress that has already been made by the bulk of the working-class. Sir R. Giffen's statistics on this question are so well known that I need not do more here than give a brief summary of the conclusions which he draws from them. He is speaking of the half-century ending in 1883-6, and claims to have shown that "the working-classes of the United Kingdom had enjoyed a great improvement in their money-wages in the last fifty years, an improvement roughly estimated at 50

to 100 per cent; that the hours of labour had been shortened in the same period 20 per cent; that along with this improvement there had been a general fall, or at any rate no increase, in the prices of the principal articles of general consumption, with the exception of rent and meat, where the increase still left to the labourer a large margin for increased miscellaneous expenditure; that meat in particular was not an article of general consumption by the masses of the community fifty years ago as it has since become; that the condition of the masses had in fact improved vastly, as was shown by the diminished rate of mortality, the increased consumption per head of tea, sugar, and the like articles, the extension of popular education, the diminution of crime and pauperism, and the increase of savings-bank deposits, as well as of other forms of savings among the masses."

If we measure this advance by money income alone, we see it most strikingly when we are told that whereas in 1883 the manual-labour class numbered thirteen millions, with an income of £41 $\frac{2}{3}$  per head, fifty years before they numbered nine millions, with an income of only £19 per head.

// By taking a longer period of one hundred years, we are able to see more in detail the nature of the progress that has been made, for in 1797 Sir F. Eden published his great work, *The State of the Poor*, for which he collected numerous budgets of family income and expenditure all over the country. In

1896 was published by the Economic Club a work of much smaller proportions entitled *Family Budgets*, and from among these we are able to select one which is sufficiently parallel with one of Eden's to make a comparison fair.

From Eden I have chosen a family living in Monmouth, which seems fairly representative of the agricultural labourer of the time, being neither one of the best nor one of the worst off. "Samuel Price, a labourer, 52 years old, has a wife and nine children, viz. a girl aged 17, who is subject to fits, and not able to work; a boy, aged 16, at service; a boy, 15, at home; another boy, 14, at home; three girls, 12, 10, and 8 years old; a boy, 3, and another boy, 1½ years old; the wife is now pregnant.

"The father mostly works for a gentleman at 8s. a week and beer; except in hay and corn harvest, when he has 1s. 6d. a day, and victuals; annual amount, about £21:3s. The boy who is 15 years old, earns, by going on errands, etc., about 1s. a week. The other children earn nothing, but pick sticks for fuel in the winter. The wife earns, by baking bread for sale, annually about 25s. Total yearly income, £25.

#### *" Expenses*

"The man says, bread at present costs him about 9s. a week throughout the year, and that he could use more if he could get it. Butter and cheese, about 6d. a week; he uses neither meat nor beer. Tea and sugar, about 4d. a week. Potatoes, 6d. a week. Fuel,

8s. 8d. a year. House rent, £2 : 2s. a year. Soap, candles, thread, etc., about £1 : 6s. Total expenses, £30 : 14s.

“Here appears a deficiency of £5 : 14s. ; yet the man says, his children mostly go without shoes and stockings, and that the cloaths worn by him and his family are, mostly, if not wholly, given them by charitable people. The gentleman, for whom this labourer works, allows him about three pints of milk a day, which, with a little bread, serves his children for breakfast ; his wife drinks tea ; their dinner is, bread, potatoes, and salt, sometimes a little fat or dripping if it can be procured cheap : their supper, generally, bread or potatoes. The man says, his family is little more than half supplied with what they could eat. He rents his house off the Corporation of Monmouth, at two guineas a year ; but not being able to pay his rent, he says, they lately seized on all his working tools, some of his furniture, etc., and sold them, so that he is obliged to borrow spades, axes, etc. ; he applied to the parish for relief ; which they offered, on condition that he would come into the poor-house with all his family ; which he has hitherto refused to do. From further inquiry it appears, that the man is honest and industrious. He is determined to remain in his house, in defiance of the Corporation. His children, having been bred up in idleness, and in the most abject illiterate state (although several of them have been at service), are so saucy that no person will employ them.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Eden's *State of the Poor*, vol. ii. p. 448.

The important point to note about this budget is, that out of the £25 which the man says he receives, or the £30 : 14s. which he expends, no less than £23 : 8s. goes in bread alone. Of his total expenditure, 89 per cent goes in food alone, and that of the most meagre kind, and a still larger percentage if we count as a part of his wages the beer and milk which he receives from his employer. Rent forms another 7 per cent of his expenditure, leaving only 6 per cent to cover all other items.

I have selected to compare with this the budget of an agricultural labourer living in Somerset, taken from the collection of the Economic Club. The man works for a farmer, and has nine children, of whom six live at home. He "breakfasts before starting, at six o'clock, and takes lunch and dinner of bread and cheese or bacon from home; he has tea at home and a hot supper at eight o'clock. They use fresh meat 'once a year,' but have bacon two or three times a day. They live two miles from the husband's work, in an old farmhouse very much out of repair and scantily furnished; there are two kitchens, four small bedrooms, and a dairy. The net value of the produce of the garden amounts to about 30s. a year. The man keeps pigs and fowls, and gets £1 extra at harvest and 4s. at haymaking. He has been married twenty-two years. One son, 21 years of age, is a private in a line regiment stationed in Upper Burmah; a girl of 17 is a housemaid in a private school in a neighbouring town; and another, a girl of 15, is in farm service near. One boy of 19 living at home does odd work

on the farm ; he gets 12s. a week wages, of which he gives 5s. for bed and board. The man is a teetotaller, but until recently was allowed nothing at harvest and other times instead of beer ; now he has 1s. a week extra from Lady-Day to Michaelmas."

The expenditure of this family is given in great detail, from regularly kept accounts. Summarised to compare with Eden's budget it comes to this. Out of an income of 17s. a week available for housekeeping, nearly 5s. a week is in excess of expenditure. Of this expenditure only 48 per cent is spent on food, 10 per cent on rent, and 41 per cent odd is left for other items. These other items are classified under nine headings ; and the food itself, instead of falling under six headings, as did that of Samuel Price (nor is it easy to see how they could have been subdivided), has no less than fifteen.

No doubt the standard of the agricultural labourer of to-day is far below what we could wish it to be, but measured by the amount of the income available after the elementary necessities of life have been supplied, there can be no doubt that even this class—which is perhaps least favoured of any—has made enormous progress.

It may of course be said that 1797 was a time of especial hardship, owing to the high price of wheat, and therefore not fairly comparable with to-day ; but from what I can gather, the agricultural labourer had for some time been in a similar condition of poverty ; and the relation of his wages to his necessary food—or what we now consider necessary—was not then

regarded as anything out of the way. There was rather a tendency to blame him for spending so much on wheaten bread, instead of being content with poorer food-stuffs. As an instance of the lamentably low standard considered sufficient for the working-man in the last century, we may take the following dietary suggested in the *Farmer's Letters* (2nd ed. 1778). The argument is that the poor find a difficulty in living because they are extravagant, and the author proceeds to draw up a table of "Seven-days messes for a stout man."

		<i>d.</i>
<i>First.</i>	Bread, 2 lbs. . . . .	2
	Cheese, 2 oz., at 4d. per lb. . . . .	0½
	Beer, two quarts . . . . .	1
<i>Second.</i>	Three messes of soup <sup>1</sup> . . . . .	2
<i>Third.</i>	Rice-pudding . . . . .	2½
<i>Fourth.</i>	Quarter of a lb. of fat meat, and 1¾ of potatoes baked together. Beer 1d. . . . .	2¾
<i>Fifth.</i>	Rice-milk . . . . .	2
<i>Sixth.</i>	Bread, cheese, and beer as first . . . . .	3½
<i>Seventh.</i>	Potatoes and fat meat, 2½ lbs. ; 2 oz. of cheese and beer . . . . .	4
		<hr/> 1s. 8¼d.

He generously calls the average 3d. a day, and then by calculating that wives eat two-thirds of what their husbands do, and children from a half to threequarters according to age, he comes to the conclusion that a family of five can be fed at 5s. 11d. a week. His righteous indignation against those readers who will deny that the poor live so cheap is quaint. "But is

<sup>1</sup> A receipt is given for the soup ; of meat it contains only the fifth part of 1 lb.

their not living so cheap any fault in the price of provisions? Let me ask in return, where the poor family is to be found that do not drink tea once a day *at least*? Can they live so cheap as if they desisted from their tea-sipping? Or are they to complain of prices, when they will not allow them to trifle at the tea-table? Is there any necessity that they should eat nothing but the best wheaten bread, when other kinds are to be had much cheaper but equally wholesome? Whenever therefore the price of provisions is complained of, let an explanatory expression come in, ‘as we chuse to live.’”

“As we choose to live,” expresses very well the fact that even then the poor had a standard, to which they obstinately adhered in spite of the efforts of their masters to break it down; and although tea was perhaps not the wisest form of expenditure, especially in the adulterated form in which it reached them in those days, yet we can hardly wonder at their craving for “the weeds of China” when we contemplate the terrible stodgy diet recommended by the author of the *Farmer's Letters*.

Interesting as it is to compare the standard over long periods of time, it is hardly less striking to watch the progress taking place at the present day. This we are enabled to do by the statistics given in the *Labour Gazette* (amongst much other useful information) as to the changes in rates of wages and hours of labour which occur from month to month. A summary of these changes for the year 1897 appeared in January 1898.

“The upward movement of wages which took place in 1896 was continued in 1897. The changes in rates of wages in the United Kingdom reported during 1897 affected 575,000 separate individuals. Of this number 538,200 received a net increase, 14,500 sustained a net decrease, and the wages of 22,300, though affected by upward and downward changes during the year, stood at the same level at the end as at the beginning. The estimated effect of all the changes on the weekly wages of the total number of workpeople affected was a net increase of £28,750 per week.”

In 1896 the net amount of rise had been £26,592 per week ; but in the two years before there had been a decrease. The rate of wages, though it rises steadily over longer periods, is subject to fluctuation and temporary set-backs according to the state of trade. But with respect to a still more important element in the Standard of Life, the number of hours worked, the improvement, while quite as marked, is more steady and less liable to be checked by temporary reversals. In 1897 the number of workpeople whose hours of labour were changed was 65,136 ; of these 409 suffered an increase, while 64,727 gained a decrease. For the five years of which we have records there has been a steady reduction in the hours of labour ; “the number of workpeople whose working hours were shortened during 1897 was greater than in any of the immediately preceding years, except 1894—the year of the adoption of the eight-hour day

in Government establishments. The result was a net decrease of over 300,000 hours per week.”<sup>1</sup>

If we take the total number of hours gained during the last five years, we find it amounts to no less than 803,212 hours per week. In only five years the working-class have gained increased leisure for themselves to the extent of over  $41\frac{1}{2}$  million of hours per year.

We may take it, then, that progress, so far as it can be measured by money and leisure, is an undoubted fact ; but it may fairly be asked how far we are justified in assuming that this implies a real raising of the Standard of Life. “If more money,” it may be objected, “means only more self-indulgence, and more leisure means only more time for the public-house and loafing, what is gained ?” We might reply that at least the possibility of better things was gained, but we are fully justified in taking a more cheerful view than this. In all the examinations which have been made into working-class expenditure, it comes out with quite sufficient clearness that the larger the income earned the smaller the proportion which is expended on satisfying the elementary appetites, while conversely “the less the worker gains, the more he invests in food, renouncing out of necessity all share in the higher joys of life, and condemning himself to a purely animal existence.” Of course the wise expenditure of time and money is an art, and one which must be learned largely by experience ; but we

<sup>1</sup> The *Labour Gazette* is issued by the Board of Trade, and costs a penny a month.

may take it as a general rule, that those who have to struggle for these precious possibilities will know how to value them; it is those to whom they come without seeking who make the most egregious blunders in their use.

But wise expenditure, whether of money or time, can only be practised under certain conditions. To consider the most elementary matters, unless there is a plentiful supply of good food and water, no rise in wages will enable the working-man to improve his diet. With regard to the first, there has never been a time when the supply of food has been so varied, so unfailing, and so cheap. If we go back to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the food of the people was almost incredibly bad—"there was often a general scarcity, which was intensified in particular districts into a local famine. At such times men were driven to use acorns and roots for food, and had recourse to the flesh of dogs and horses; some cases of cannibalism are reported. It was only rarely that starving people were reduced to such extremities, but there is some reason to believe that they habitually used diseased and unwholesome food, and that they were thus rendered a ready prey to the ravages of pestilence."<sup>1</sup> Even in the last century any account of the diet of the people rings the changes with a terrible monotony on cheese, bread, bacon, and potatoes, enlivened only by the iniquities of tea-drinking and beer. A similar monotony may still exist in some country districts; but the travelling grocer, the

<sup>1</sup> Cunningham, *Growth of English Industry and Commerce*, p. 346.

co-operative stores, the general shop, and all the other expedients for opening up the food-market to the consumer are doing their work, and anything like periodical scarcity is now unknown. But it is only in the towns that the working-man can avail himself to the full of the immense variety of food now within his means, and this fact has no doubt a good deal to do with the partiality for town life. Those who regret this partiality might do something to obviate it by organising better food-supplies to country villages; or, what would have a similar effect, by improving the local knowledge of cookery.

With regard to the water-supply the case is very different. Here it is the townsman who is helpless to provide himself with pure water, at whatever cost, and is completely in the hands of those who undertake the business of providing it. Our scientific knowledge, which enables us to force water to the top of enormous houses crowded like rabbit warrens, has greatly increased the danger arising from any possible deficiency or pollution; while the probability of pollution is itself increased by modern systems of drainage. No increase in wages can help the working-man here, except in so far as he can refuse to live where there is no proper and permanent water-supply.

Another most important matter, which is only to a limited extent under the working-man's control, is his housing and sanitation. He may be willing and able to pay a high rent, but if decent accommodation is not to be had he cannot help himself. He must live within reach of his work, and the choice may be

only between bad and worse. Are we improving in this respect or not? The answer is not quite obvious, for if we have got rid of much of the brutal ignorance and carelessness in sanitary affairs which characterised our ancestors, we have new problems arising from the overcrowding in our large towns which we have certainly not succeeded in solving as yet. If we go back to the fifteenth century again, we are told that in addition to outbreaks of plague "there was chronic typhoid in the towns, and leprosy all over the country. The undrained, neglected soil; the shallow, stagnant waters which lay upon the surface of the ground; the narrow unhealthy homes of all classes of the people; the filthy, neglected streets of the towns; the insufficient and unwholesome food; the abundance of stale fish which was eaten; the scanty variety of the vegetables which were consumed, . . . predisposed the agricultural and town population alike to typhoidal diseases, and left them little chance of recovery when stricken down with pestilence." Our worst enemies cannot indeed accuse us of being as bad as this now; but we need only refer to the Report of the Commission of 1885 on the Housing of Working-classes, to find statements which will seem as shocking to our children as these are to us; and there is no one with any knowledge of the poor who will not be able to recall instances of gross moral and physical evil arising out of overcrowded or insanitary dwellings. But towards raising the standard in this respect every one can help by bringing into force existing sanitary regulations, and an important ally in the task has

arisen in the bicycle, which may really do much to solve the problem of overcrowding by enabling the working-man and his family to live at a distance from their work, and yet be independent of railway companies.

The question of the employment of leisure raises a different, but no less important, set of considerations. Leisure, like money, can only be profitably employed under certain conditions; and it does not necessarily follow that because a man has obtained more leisure for himself he will be able to turn it to advantage. Take, for instance, the possibilities of recreation. In the towns there is now no lack of these to suit every taste and every purse. Theatres, music, libraries, and exhibitions of every conceivable kind, are open even to the poorest, and no man need complain of the provision made for his entertainment. All that is needed is that the working-man and woman should be thoroughly aroused to the possibilities awaiting them in this direction. In the country matters have not advanced so far; if the temptations of the town are absent, so also are the opportunities of wholesome recreation wanting to a great extent, and one hears still of country villages where the public-house is the only provision made against the monotony of the daily toil. But even the country has its advantages in the possibilities of cricket and football, from which the young people of the towns are to some extent cut off; and in these days of cheap literature the absence of a public library does not mean that any one need be entirely without mental recreation.

For men and women of maturer age family life and family affections must always, in any healthy community, form the centre round which their interests and their recreations chiefly cluster. No man can be entirely dull with these—witness the account of the “recreation” of one of the poorest families described in the *Family Budgets*—

“*Recreation.*—The man plays a little upon the flute, mainly to amuse the children, in whom he finds his chief pleasure. Sitting, coatless, before the fire of an evening, a boy on one knee and a girl on the other, he sings or whistles, and, as he says, ‘as a game with ’em in my way.’ At 7.30 P.M. (having arisen at 7 A.M.) the children go to bed, and the man goes to his brother’s to have a game of dominoes. These visits are not returned. The brother ‘being a single man and a little better off, he thinks as my place ain’t quite good enough for him.’ Expenses are scarcely ever incurred for recreation, but last Bank Holiday they all went for a country walk towards Dulwich, and hired a mail-cart for the children, three hours at a 1d. an hour. Neither the man nor his wife has been to a theatre or entertainment since marriage. ‘We have pantomime enough at home’ they say.”

Just as it is in the need of more leisure for family life that the plea for shorter hours finds its most telling argument, so also in the regenerating influence of family life we may find the strongest arguments against any steps, legislative or philan-

thropic, which tend to break down the responsibility and the ties which hold the family together. The solitary inmate of the lodging-house, whether "common" or made select with all the appliances of luxury, is in danger of living on an altogether lower plane than the man whose life is the centre of a home. More money and more leisure he may have, but the strongest interests of life will be wanting, and those with experience know that the lodging-house man is generally drifting as aimlessly as a straw upon a stream.

"But a man may have wider interests than those of the family life," it may be objected, and this is of course true. Wider instincts may indeed lift the life to a still higher plane, and afford even greater scope for profitable employment of leisure. But it may be taken as a general rule for ordinary men that wider interests grow out of narrower ones. For instance, the wider interests of the working-man are primarily those of his trade-union or his sick-benefit society. But one of the strongest motives to join union or benefit society is the desire to provide for wife and children or parents in time of need; and if a census could be taken amongst those who have cast off domestic responsibilities and are haunting shelters, casual wards, and lodging-houses, a startlingly small proportion would be found members of trade-unions or benefit societies.

Indeed, one great reason for refraining from interference with the more elementary interests and duties of men's lives, is that by means of them alone they

can push their way forward to a stronger hold upon life. We cannot force interests or occupations or benefits of any kind upon men from without, however desirable we may think them; they must grow out of their own strivings and desires, their own planning and progress. The best we can do for each other is to remove unnecessary obstacles, and the worst—to weaken any of the motives which urge us to strive.

### III

Wages alone, then, cannot put good things into a man's life; but it is none the less true that without good wages he cannot avail himself of them to the fullest extent. It is of prime importance that a plentiful supply of good things should be organised within the community; but granted that, we have still to ask, upon what terms are men admitted to a share in them? Under our present constitution (and we are not concerned with any other) the vast majority of us measure our share by the wages we earn, and as our wages increase so our share increases. Before proceeding further to consider how the Standard of Life reacts upon wages, it will be necessary to consider a little more closely the meaning of the terms we shall use.

There is a good deal of rather vague talk about the rate of wages among people who would be puzzled to state exactly what was the real position as regards earnings in any industry. The rate may be quoted by the hour, day, or week; and to say that a man

earns  $6\frac{1}{2}$ d. an hour tells us little unless we also know how many hours he works in the day and how many days in the week. Nay, we may very easily be deceived as to the position of a man unless we also know how many weeks he will work in the year; whether, that is, his trade is subject to long slack seasons and out of work for which he must make provision. Thus a high rate per hour or day may mean a comparatively low one taken over a longer period, as in the case of bricklayers who cannot work during a frost, or miners who "play" perforce two or three days out of the six. Piece-work, again, and overtime, introduce fresh complications, all of which will have to be taken into account in estimating the financial position of the worker in any branch of industry; and it is unsafe to base any judgment upon a general statement of the "rate of wages" until we have informed ourselves on all these details.

Again, when we have ascertained the money-wages, we have further to inquire whether there are not other advantages attached to the work which have a money value. An agricultural labourer will frequently have a cottage rent free, and a Northumberland hind can claim his thousand yards of potatoes in addition to his money-wage. On the other hand, there are often specific disadvantages to be taken into account which represent a diminution of the stated wages. A bad system of fines will act practically as a reduction, and in some of the worst paid industries earnings are still further reduced by the fact that

the unfortunate workers have to "find" their own materials.

In making comparisons as between wages at different times or different places we have further to consider the purchasing power of money. We have to remember, that is, that a man with high wages in one place may be able to buy less with them than a man with lower wages in another. At the gold-diggings, for instance, labourers can always command high money-wages, because gold is plentiful and labour scarce where every man wants to be working on his own account. But then the prices which he will have to pay are also very high—we are told that at Klondike a man must pay £6 a week for food of the coarsest description—and so the labourer may really be worse off than on a much lower wage in England. The higher wages to be earned in London, again, as compared with country towns, are partly counteracted by the fact of higher rents, though against this again we have to set off the plentiful supply of cheap food.

High wages, then, if accompanied by high prices, do not necessarily mean that the wage-earner is prosperous, but may mean only that there is a plentiful supply of money in the country.

Low wages and high prices means the time of the greatest hardship for the labourer; it implies a scarcity in commodities as compared with labour, and in its extreme form constitutes famine.

On the other hand, the opposite extreme of high wages and low prices means, from this point of view,

the greatest prosperity for the working-man ; for then his money-wages, translated into the things he wants to buy with them, show larger still. He gains both as seller and buyer, both as producer and consumer.

This close relation between wages and prices has always to be recognised in historical inquiries into the condition of the working-classes, and generally takes the form of expressing wages by the amount of wheat they would buy. Thus we read, for instance, in Rogers' *Work and Wages*, that in 1495 "an artisan, therefore, earned nearly a bushel of wheat by a day's labour, and an ordinary labourer three-quarters of a bushel. A week's work would enable an artisan to purchase more than a quarter of malt, and a little more than seven days' work would supply the farm labourer with a quarter of malt."

Now when wages are so low as to be entirely swallowed up in purchasing the bare necessities of life, as in the case quoted of Samuel Price (p. 27), this way of measuring them by the amount of wheat they will buy, really represents their value to the working-man. Moreover, the fact that the price of wheat used to vary enormously in former times with good and bad seasons, wars and rumours of wars, etc., thus making the value of wages as measured in it vary from year to year—this fact represented a serious difficulty to the working-man in organising his expenditure. One year his wages would barely supply him with bread for his family, while the next year, though earning the same money, he might have a large part of it to spend on other things. At the

beginning of the century, *e.g.* the price of wheat varied from 120s. to 50s. a quarter in five years.

Matters stand quite differently now that the wheat markets of the world are open to us. While the price of wheat remains low and steady it forms but a small item in working-class expenditure; every one has as much bread as he wants, as is shown by the fact that no one buys more bread when the price falls, and we no longer measure a man's prosperity by the amount of wheat he can buy. Anything like a famine would of course bring this into importance again; meanwhile the prices of coal, meat, housing, clothing, and many other things must be taken into account in considering the purchasing power of wages.

This, then, is one aspect of low prices. The cheaper the things are which the working-class habitually consume, the better off the wage-earners are, inasmuch as they are able to spend their earnings to better advantage.

But there is another aspect of low prices which cannot be left out of sight, and which is most familiar to those who are accustomed to hear the talk of business men. When prices are falling, the first effect is to diminish profits, and thus the business world becomes depressed, and business is more and more difficult to carry on. If there is a difficulty in cutting down the expenses of making the commodities of which the price is falling—and among those expenses wages must be included—then it may happen in some cases that the amount of work will be

diminished, and a certain number of men thrown out of work.

On the other hand, when prices are rising profits increase at once, business is brisk, and every one is at work. But wages may be slower to rise proportionately, and the working-man will find himself buying his goods at a high price with only the same wage as before, and this of course means that he will have to restrict his consumption.

In considering movements of wages, then, we must also take into careful consideration movements in the prices of those things which the wage-earner buys. We must remember that while a rise in prices is "good for trade," it is bad for the buyer; and while a fall in prices is good for the buyer, it is "bad for trade."

I now want to consider very briefly some of the theories which have been held at different times concerning the movements of wages; for at the present time, at any rate, theories about wages seem to have some influence in determining what wages shall be.

In the first place, there has been what we may call the Proletariat Theory; the theory, that is, that the working-class will always multiply its numbers so fast as to keep wages down to the lowest point at which they can live. Even J. S. Mill writes: "It is but rarely that improvements in the condition of the labouring classes do anything more than give a temporary margin, speedily filled up by an increase of their numbers. The use they commonly choose to make of any advantageous change in their circum-

stances, is to take it out in the form which, by augmenting the population, deprives the succeeding generation of the benefit." This was the theory of despair, and was maintained by writers whose observations were made at a time when the labouring class was peculiarly poverty-stricken, and therefore degraded and reckless. The possibility of better things was recognised, but rather as a forlorn hope than as a practical consideration. "Unless, either by their general improvement in intellectual and moral culture, or at least by raising their habitual standard of comfortable living, they can be taught to make a better use of favourable circumstances, nothing permanent can be done for them; the most promising schemes end only in having a more numerous, but not a happier people."

Taken out of their context, these words read to us as if they had been written of the class which is peculiarly our despair at the present day, the Residuum which gathers in our large towns. These are the people whom we cannot help because they are without a standard to maintain; the people who marry without provision of any kind, almost without a home and without the least prospect for the future; the people who marry when out of work on the plea that "two can get along better than one." But no one would say to-day that this class is representative of the working-class as a whole, or indeed anything more than the fringe upon its outskirts. A higher and definite Standard of Life has always been operative amongst some at least, and was beginning to re-assert

itself more widely even as Mill wrote ; and it was owing to the assertion of this higher standard, and the demands to which it led for higher wages, that the theory of wages took another form.

This was the Wage-Fund Theory, another low-spirited view of the prospect of wage-earners, which maintained that any attempt to raise wages must frustrate itself, not this time by the perverseness of the wage-earners themselves, but by the inevitable limitations of what was called the wages fund. There is a certain amount of capital, it was argued, which is devoted to production, and of this a certain amount goes in wages ; this amount is divided up amongst the workers, and the share of each worker depends upon the number amongst whom it is divided. If for a time wages are raised beyond that amount, it can only be at the expense of profits, which will ultimately diminish the fund applied to wages. Thus the last state of the wage-earner will be worse than the first, and the temporary rise will be more than counterbalanced by the subsequent fall.

This theory also has proved to be too desponding. Those who held it had not allowed sufficiently for the fact that a man with a high standard of life may be so much better a worker than one with a low standard as to make it more profitable to pay high wages. Just as it pays better to keep good horses in a good condition than to work with horses which are broken down or half-starved, so it is found that better work can be got from well-paid men than from ill-paid. It may be thought that this is a low ground upon

which to base an argument for the possibility of a higher life for the workers ; but it must be borne in mind that humanity can only remain solvent so long as it is capable of producing more than it consumes ; if it once took to consuming more than it produced, the bankruptcy which ultimately means extinction would be near at hand. For the industrial world to have realised then that increased consumption means, at any rate up to a certain point, increased productive powers, is to have changed from the attitude of the miser who hoards his gold and starves to death for fear of poverty, to that of the wise husbandman who fearlessly entrusts his treasure to the soil and receives it again many-fold.

It would be rash to formulate any theory of wages as predominant at the present day, but now that we have seen how the supposed limitations of former theories have broken down, we are free to consider some of the actual influences at work in determining the Rate of Wages. Foremost amongst these is the Standard of Life in the sense in which we have been considering it. Man, as we have seen, is progressive in his wants and desires, and the kind of life which he definitely sets before himself as desirable is the kind of life he will tend to have. One great obstacle to progress is the lack of any definite ideas, which makes one thing seem desirable to-day and another to-morrow, and no line of conduct persisted in for any length of time. But where we find settled purposes in life and a definite standard, we have a progressive force, of which one effect is to check any

reduction in wages and further any advance. This force is of course liable to be frustrated, and must always be limited in its effects by the particular conditions of the moment—conditions which may be summed up as “the state of the labour market,” which we shall consider presently. But it is none the less operative, and can be traced in its working, both negatively and positively. *Negatively*, in so far as where it is absent wages fall; *positively*, as the actual basis of a rise.

It has been seriously urged<sup>1</sup> that one cause of the low wages of women is their low standard of physical nutrition, and that, to put it plainly, if women ate more they would earn more. To this the obvious objection is sometimes made, that a rise in wages must precede a rise in the standard, that you must earn more before you can eat more. But to show just how the matter works, I will give an instance which once came under my notice.

Some time ago certain employers advertised for a woman to take a situation at a salary which was named. I do not know how many applied, probably a large number, but out of them three were selected to be interviewed. The employers sat in an inner room, the candidates in a little ante-room whence they were summoned one by one. When all had been seen a pause ensued, there was probably not much to choose between them, and it occurred to the employers that here was an opportunity. Number one was summoned again, and offered the post if she

<sup>1</sup> See p. 22.

would take it at a lower salary. She had no time to consult the others, or to think it over; but she had a definite standard of what women ought to receive in order to live an efficient life, and she refused the offer. Number two was summoned, and returned triumphant; she had a lower standard, and had accepted the lower salary, and had thereby done her share towards lowering the standard for other women. There was of course no reason why any of the three should have taken the lower salary, if they had all had the same standard; but they had not, and in consequence the rate of wages in that particular post was lowered.

This lower standard of women is probably the only justification for the outcry against women's competition in the industries where both men and women are employed. Just in so far as they are willing to take lower wages for the same work, it is because they have a lower standard of what is necessary and desirable. The cure for this lies, of course, not in excluding them from the work, but in helping them to raise their standard in every possible way.

It may be that the only effectual method of raising and maintaining the standard of women workers will prove to be that adopted by the men, the method of combining to make the standard effective by mutual agreement and support. Whatever else of good or of evil has been achieved by Trade-Unions, they have been of fundamental service to the wage-earners by emphasising the fact that no individual can lower his standard without endangering the position of all

his fellows. How far they have been successful in enabling any class of workers to press forward to a higher standard of earnings and conditions of work than it would otherwise have done, is a further point, and one which is full of interest.

The process of maintaining or raising the standard of any class of workmen receives its severest check when it is said that the prices of the commodities produced are so low that they will not admit of a rise in wages. If the employer could demonstrate that his profits were already so low that he could only just afford to keep going, this argument was formerly considered to be unanswerable, and the workman's claim would be abandoned. But a new attitude is now apparent. Wages, it is argued, must be taken into account before prices are fixed, and instead of allowing wages to fall because prices fall, producers should raise prices because wages have risen. This doctrine is very clearly advanced in the article upon "The Lock-Out in the Coal Trade," by Mr. Edwards (*Economic Journal*, 1893): "It is quite obvious that behind the concrete proposals of both owners and men lies a great question of principle. The employers may say that the prices at which they have accepted contracts will not allow them to make a profit unless wages are reduced. . . . The men do not deny the statements of the owners as to prices. Their ground of refusal is quite other. They say when they were unorganised they accepted reduced wages on a decline in prices because they could not help themselves. The object of their union is to pre-

vent this in future. They therefore now decline to let wages be regulated by prices. . . . The miners are not going to work for less than a living wage, and owners should recognise that before recklessly reducing prices. . . . They do not object, however, to having their wages regulated by arbitration based on prices, provided a living wage minimum is first secured. Thus the real question at issue is whether labour is or is not to have the right of exercising a voice in fixing prices."

No one can fail to see the importance of this argument, but in estimating its influence we must bear in mind the effect of a rise in prices on the consumer. The people who were most affected by the rise in the price of coal in 1897 were the old women in London with only just enough to live on, whose supply of coal had to be curtailed; and if many wage-earners could succeed in raising the price of their own product they might ultimately find themselves really poorer than before.

Before proceeding to questions of the labour market there are certain practical difficulties and confusion arising out of the question of the Standard of Life which may be noticed here.

All facts are capable of misinterpretation, and none more so than facts in which human nature is concerned. When people begin to notice social conditions the observation they first make is, that a very small income and an unsatisfactory life generally go together, and from this they hasten to conclude that if they can increase the income in any way the life

will become more satisfactory. Then they gradually learn by experience that an increase of income, unless it is result of—or at least accompanied by—an improved Standard of Life, is either mischievous, as when it enables the recipient to spend more on drink or self-indulgence, or else it cannot be maintained. That is, a gift from outside may merely enable the recipient to diminish his earnings proportionately; either by doing less work, or by taking less money for what he does. To increase wages is one of the most effectual ways of helping on the worker; to supplement them is the surest means of making progress impossible. Where the worker is counting upon help, whether from out-relief or charity or his family, then he will be content to earn less and his employer will be content to pay less, than if he had only his earnings to look to. Hence the greatest blunder the philanthropist can make is to give to any individual or class because wages are low; by so doing he is only making them lower still.

Another danger to which the philanthropist is liable, is that of lowering the standard of those whom he desires to benefit. A hundred years ago the efforts of the benevolent were mainly directed towards devising means by which the labourer could live more cheaply; that is, they aimed at lowering his standard instead of raising it. It was then that soup first assumed that importance in philanthropy which it still possesses to a large degree. Count Rumford was especially noted for his skill in devising cheap soups. Here is a receipt for one which is recom-

mended as "highly deserving the attention of the masters and governors of work-houses."

*Receipt for a very Cheap Soup*

"Take of water eight gallons, and mixing with it 5 lbs. of barley meal, boil it to the consistency of a thick jelly. Season it with salt, pepper, vinegar, sweet herbs, and four red herrings, pounded in a mortar. Instead of bread, add to it 5 lbs. of Indian corn, made into *samp*, and stirring it together with a ladle, serve it up immediately in portions of 20 ounces."

The cost of providing this soup for sixty-four persons is worked out at one farthing per head.

The danger of familiarising the people with cheap foods is twofold. Even if the food is nourishing, there is the danger—as Malthus pointed out—that those who use it will be content to let their wages fall until they are only just sufficient to provide it, and then when hard times come there is nothing cheaper to fall back upon. But there is also the great probability that the cheaper food will not really be so nourishing as that for which it is substituted—red-herring soup is a poor substitute even for bread and bacon—and then the labourer's efficiency and power of earning will be impaired.

These considerations do not apply to the majority of our wage-earners to-day; for their standard includes much beside the bare necessities of life. Any economy which they can practise in food—so

long as it does not impair their efficiency—sets free more of their income for other purposes, and is so far good. Hence the importance of teaching the wives of working-men how to cook well and economically.

But to the people upon whom our soup-charities of to-day are exercised they apply with all their force. The casual labourer throughout the winter now looks upon chance bowls of soup, paid for with odd halfpence or not all, as the standard for himself and his children, instead of three meals a day provided out of his earnings. Formerly even a poor man included a settled home, however humble (it might be, amongst his necessities; now his standard has been lowered by charitable enterprise until he is content to pass his life in shelters, casual wards, and semi-charitable lodging-houses. It is much cheaper than to maintain a home, and involves less work; so those men—of whom there is always a considerable number—who like to follow the line of least resistance, *i.e.* lead the easiest life, revert to the nomad type and have their standard permanently lowered. The following extract from a report of the Whitechapel Guardians on the influence of “cheap and free shelters” is instructive:

“The shelters do not become centres of improvement, tending to restore the inmates to self-respect and independence; they are merely places of temporary lodging, from which the vast bulk of the inmates go away as badly off as they came; their action is similar in result to indiscriminate gifts of

small doles of money, which weaken the character without improving the condition of the recipient. The shelters furthermore tend to increase the number of destitute people, without regular means of employment, by making the life of the shiftless and idle more easy, and offering a new temptation to those who are willing to live, as far as possible, at the expense of others.

“The shelters aid and abet the neglect of the duties of family life, on the doing of which the happiness of humankind so largely depends. Facilities are afforded for husbands and wives to evade their mutual responsibilities; instances have been met with of the husband being in one shelter, while his wife and children were in another; of the husband entirely deserting his wife and children, who were being maintained in the shelters. The effect upon the children is disastrous; their training and proper bringing up is neglected; they have in many cases no schooling.”

There is no doubt that many people who, but for the shelters, would have had homes of their own, are now without. What would become of them if the shelters ceased their work? Those who have most experience say, “Some of them would apply to the guardians; some would betake themselves to agencies which endeavour by reformatory and other efforts to restore them to self-respect and independence; a large part would re-enter the ranks of self-supporting workers by making the small

effort which would, in most cases, be required for the purpose." In other words, when the temptation to live a lower life was removed, the homeless vagrant would rise again to the higher level of the independent wage-earner with his own home. The real work of charity is not to afford facilities to the poor to lower their standard, but to step in when calamity threatens and prevent it from falling.

It is sometimes thought that the two virtues of maintaining a high standard and of exercising thrift are opposed to each other, and indeed incompatible. If this were so, we should be forced to choose one of the two and reluctantly abandon the other as a vice. But the apparent conflict is really due to a narrow interpretation of both virtues, and disappears when we see them in their fullest significance. The true opposite to a high standard of life is extravagance, for a man with a really high standard regards life as a whole, and so regulates it that no part may shame the rest; while the essence of extravagance is to live in and for the present without thought for the future and to lavish upon present pleasures the resources which are owing to future needs.

Thrift, again, loses its hard narrowness when we no longer confine it to the commonplace meaning of saving money. A thriving man is one whose well-being in the present promotes, rather than hinders, his well-being in the future; and the really thrifty man is one who so orders his present that it may bear fruit in the future. A good house may

be as profitable an investment as money in the bank, and better than either will be children well brought up, with strength and skill, and good-will towards their parents. Thrift, in one form or another, is for all of us the only way to realising the highest standard; while the niggardliness which will not cultivate present opportunities and make them fruitful, is one of the worst forms of waste, for it wastes life itself.

## IV

In the long run then, it is the Standard of Life aimed at by any class which determines what the wages of the individuals of that class will be. But this tendency is subject to many checks and limitations, according to the conditions of particular times and places. We say that it is the state of the tides which determines how far inland the waves will reach along the coast; but high-water mark will differ greatly within very few miles. In one place there will be a heap of shingle to be cleared away before progress can be made; in another a rock proves an insuperable barrier; while in a third a smooth bed of sand or a well-worn channel affords an easy passage to the waters. So too with the tide of progress; in one place it may have to overcome an obstacle of prejudices and traditions; in another it is barred by incapacity and sloth; and in favoured places where obstacles are fewest it will rise highest and most easily.

Some of the chief conditions which at any given time or place limit the effect of the Standard of Life, are summed up as the "state of the labour market." What does this mean?

We may begin our explanation by considering what is meant by a market.

There is an interesting account in Sir Henry Maine's *Village Communities*, of the probable origin of our markets and market law. When society is still in its more primitive condition of small and mainly self-sufficing communities, it has generally been the case that all prices are determined by custom, to the exclusion of bargaining, and what Adam Smith called the "higgling of the market." No one would think of trying to get a higher price for a thing because it was scarce, or because his neighbours wanted it very much. He asked the price which his father and grandfather used to ask before him. But these small communities, however friendly and peaceful they might be internally, were frequently hostile to neighbouring communities, and it was convenient to have a neutral piece of ground at points where the domains of several villages converged. "These were the markets. They were probably the only places at which the members of the different primitive groups met for any purpose except warfare, and the persons who came to them were doubtless at first persons specially empowered to exchange the produce and manufactures of one little village community for those of another. . . . But besides the notion of neutrality, another idea

was anciently associated with markets. This was the idea of sharp practice and hard bargaining."

This account of the origin of the market as the place where business was carried on with acknowledged enemies, seems partly to explain some of the strange contradictions of modern business transactions when compared with what is considered honourable amongst friends. Such contradictions used to be still more marked in the different attitudes maintained by the Roman law—the *Jus Gentium*—on the one hand and the Canon Law on the other. In its earlier days the Christian Church struggled hard to introduce and maintain in the relations of business life the principles and morality which were held binding upon the individual. Extremists even argued that all trade was wrong, since it was based upon covetousness and the desire for gain; and though this difficulty was ultimately got over by allowing trade to be permissible when "the merchant looks upon the gain, not as the object, but as the reward of his labour,"<sup>1</sup> many questions of detail remained to be solved by the ingenuity of the Church. Is it right to buy cheap and sell dear? is a sale made unlawful by a defect in the article sold? is the seller bound to reveal a fault in an article? what is the *just* price? Such are some of the problems which men endeavoured to solve in accordance with Christian doctrines, and which we are still only able to meet by compromise.

The Roman legist, on the other hand, starting

<sup>1</sup> Ashley, *Economic History*, vol. i.

from the idea of natural hostility between buyer and seller, had a much easier task before him. Two striking utterances are, we are told, quoted as authoritative in Justinian's digest: "In purchase and sale it is naturally allowed to the contracting parties to try to over-reach one another," and "in buying and selling, a man has a natural right to purchase for a small price that which is really more valuable, and to sell at a high price that which is less valuable, and for either to over-reach the other."

If we look upon the efforts of the Church to counteract this spirit of hostility in trade, as an attempt to maintain the old *régime* of customary prices, it must be allowed to have failed altogether. The time came when the customs which had been a protection to the working-man began to be felt only as oppressive. He found that if freed from the shackles of custom he could do far better for himself by what we now call free contract; and an important chapter in economic history is that which tells how the English labourer freed himself from the restraints of customary prices and services, and began to work for a money-wage. In other words, he found he could do better for himself in the market, amongst quasi-enemies, than by remaining under the shelter of old traditions.

But though the morality of the market is not that which the Christian Church strove to impress upon it, there has nevertheless developed a state of things which goes far to modify the old Roman ideal of mutual over-reaching. Over-reaching in a

bargain implies that one party to the bargain has knowledge which is concealed from the other; but our modern ideal of a market is one where all concerned have complete knowledge of all the circumstances involved, and where the possibility of over-reaching is therefore reduced to a minimum. The market may still be held in some particular place, but this is not essential. "The traders may be spread over a whole town, or region of country, and yet make a market, if they are, by means of fairs, meetings, published price lists, the post-office or otherwise, in close communication with each other." And this close communication, which has now been brought almost to perfection, implies knowledge; knowledge, that is, of the exact nature of the goods concerned, of the amounts offered for sale, of the stores in reserve, of competing buyers, of prices—past, present, and future, and so on. It may be that the honesty which comes perforce with the increase of publicity and knowledge, is not so fair a virtue as that which scorns the opportunities of fraud; but for the transactions of exchange, which in our time affect the well-being of every member of the community, individual heroism is not so sure a basis as the obstacle to fraud which is presented by knowledge.

Now the market for labour is in many respects similar to the markets for commodities. Just as in certain localities we still find a market-place where sellers bring their goods and expose them for sale, so in certain country towns the labourers still come

together at given times to hire themselves out, and employers come as purchasers of their labour. But for the most part the labour market is not localised; knowledge of wages, and of the demand for labour in different places, is spread by means of trade organisations, newspapers, private communications, and reports; and thus the labourer is enabled to get the best price for what he can offer.

But in one very essential point the labour market differs from other markets. The seller of sugar or cotton, or any other tangible commodity, when he has made his bargain, hands over the goods, and is no more concerned with them. Not so the labourer. *His* commodity is inseparable from himself, and can be yielded only by himself; hence the bargain can only be made for stated times, and for so long as it holds he is debarred from entering upon new transactions.

Moreover, though the bargain is always open to revision, the labourer is at a disadvantage, in so far as he cannot move about freely. If there is a demand for coal in London, it can be sent from Newcastle at a few hours' notice; it is a less simple matter—though infinitely easier than it used to be—for the labourer to transport himself and his family and his goods to the place where they may be needed.

Just in so far as either party to the bargain is unable to avail himself of his knowledge, we tend to revert to the old hostile conditions of the market, and the bargain is degraded into a struggle between strong and weak. A shoemaker may know that he

could get good wages in Northampton, but if he cannot go there, his knowledge is ineffective, and he will have to take the lower wage offered where he is. If it happens that in that place the shoemaking trade is declining, there will be less and less demand for men of his trade; and either his wages will fall lower and lower, or he will be out of work altogether. The supply of labour in that trade will be too great for the demand. On the other hand, a new industry may be started in the place, such as cycle-making, and there may be such a demand for cycle-makers that wages in that trade may be very high until more competent labourers have been attracted from other towns.

The demand and supply of labour, thus, will have a great deal to do in determining the amount of work and wages to be received by each individual at any time or place. Let us consider a little more exactly what is meant by the supply of labour.

In the first it does not mean simply that there are men there willing to do the work. The shoemakers in our town want work badly enough; but it is cycle-makers who are in request, and as cycle-makers they are useless. In all old countries, again, there are always a certain number of men out of work, and therefore a supply of labour. But it is always labour of a *particular kind* that is wanted, and of that particular kind the supply may easily fall short. So that we must say that the supply of labour in any industry means the number of men *able* and *willing* to do the particular kind of work.

Now, whether or not people will be *willing* to do the work depends upon the advantages offered in that work compared with what they could get in other ways. High wages in the cycle trade may attract them from other branches of engineering. Special discomforts, again, as in a stoker's work, may make the number of men willing to do it small, even when high wages are offered.

How many men will be *able* to do the work depends upon education and strength. If much education is needed, the number of parents willing to have their children taught may be small, but this again depends largely upon their standard. If they have set before them a high standard for themselves and their children, they will be willing to make sacrifices for the sake of giving the children a better education. Amongst artisans this will generally mean that they will be content to wait longer before the children begin to earn; so that they may learn a trade and not be put at once to unskilled labour. Very much of the prosperity of the workers depends upon the wisdom with which they select their children's occupations; and those who are in contact with the children, whether in the schools or at their homes, can do much both by advice and encouragement towards ensuring them a fair start in life.

Thus we see that the ability of the wage-earners to maintain and raise their standard will depend largely upon their being educated to do a kind of work which is in demand; while, again, their willingness

to give this education to their children will depend upon the Standard of Life at which they aim.

What is it which determines what kind of work will be in demand ?

In the first place, it is evidently the consumer, the person who wants and buys things, whose desires determine what things shall be made. Few people, none who have to earn their living, will spend their energies in making things which no one wants to have or to use. Hence, as the wage-earners of the world far exceed in numbers all others, it is very largely they who, by their wants, determine what kind of work wage-earners shall be engaged in. It is the working-class demand which makes brewing a profitable business, and causes many men to be employed in breweries. It is unfortunately a working-class demand for cheap and showy articles which supports many of our "sweated" industries, and causes many men and women to be employed in badly paid and unhealthy occupations. On the other hand, just in proportion as the masses of the people insist upon having really good value for their money, in the sense that they will prefer solid well-made articles to those which are showy and cheap, they will be making a demand for well-paid work done under good conditions. Here again, then, we see how a high standard of living helps forward the position of the wage-earners.

In simpler states of society than ours all that is required to enable industry to be carried on are these two sets of conditions—that there should be people

able to make things, and people wanting to use the things when made, and able to give other things instead. In some of the smaller industries this is still sufficient. The village blacksmith still has his customers coming direct to him and paying him for each of his services as he requires them. The mangle-woman organises her own connection amongst her neighbours, and requires no middleman between her and them ; though even she may lose much time in seeking for custom, and many customers through not knowing where to look for them. But whenever work is carried on on a large scale, it becomes impossible for the worker himself to manage the "organising," or the keeping of the business together. Men are necessary who will give their whole time to this, who "study the markets," *i.e.* find out the people who want to buy, who determine just what is wanted, who know where to go for capital on the one hand and workers on the other, and can bring them and hold them together for the purposes of production. These are the "captains of industry," without whom capital and labour are equally helpless under modern conditions to "make work"; that is, to conduct new enterprises. A great industrial undertaking like the Manchester Ship Canal, may be in the air for years before it is actually carried out ; the capital may be easily attainable, and a plentiful supply of workmen to be had, but it will not be started until the men appear who have the mental power of organising it, and can inspire confidence in that power. Then the enterprise grows like the seed

that has been waiting for the gardener to plant it in the ground.

These men of enterprise, then (*undertakers*, as they used to be called), are another condition essential to progress, since without them industry stagnates. It is they who are the dealers in the labour market, who organise and focus the demand for labour, which has its rise in the wants of the consumer.

These, then, are some of the conditions which go to determine the state of the labour market, and we see now what is meant by saying that labour, like other valuable things, is subject to market law, and must seek its best market if it is to get a good price, *i.e.* high wages. It now remains to consider some of the obstacles which at the present time check the free movement of labour to the places where it could command the highest prices.

In the first place there must always be some natural reluctance to move far or frequently on the part of the man who has made himself a home and a circle of interests and friends. For this reason it is to the young that we chiefly look for seeking out new fields for work. Nevertheless, under our present conditions it is often necessary for older men with families to tear themselves away from the place where they have taken root, and to make a fresh start in life under new conditions. To some this comes as a pleasant change, and for all—however hard—it is—at any rate infinitely healthier than the stagnation which settles upon a district of town or country which has lost its occupation.

The question of housing again may prove a serious difficulty to the man who has a family to consider. It is true that under the influence of the speculative builder houses spring up like mushrooms as soon as—or even before—there is any indication of a demand ; but it will always be more or less hard for a new-comer, with a large family and no available references, to get himself accepted as a tenant on reasonable terms. Moreover, the very natural and desirable form of saving, by which the working-man gradually becomes possessor of his house, seems almost incompatible with the preservation of his powers of migration ; unless indeed the building societies can organise some system under which a house in one part of the country can be exchanged for one of equivalent value in other parts.

The expenses of moving about in search of work, again, are so considerable an obstacle to the mobility of labour as to have been definitely recognised and provided for by some of the Trade Unions. For men who are unsupported by their union this expense is apt to come just at the time when they are least able to meet it.

These are what we may call the natural and inevitable obstacles to the free movement of labour to its best markets. But there are others of a more artificial kind, and even more stagnating in their influence.

Originally it was the State which sinned against “the law of the market,” by imposing restrictions upon the movements of the labourer. In the desire

to enforce the responsibility of each parish for the maintenance of its own poor, the "settlement laws" were enacted, by which workmen who left their own parish in search of work were always liable to be sent back again, upon the ground that they were likely to become chargeable to the rates of some other parish. In this way the relief which migration affords to congested districts was checked, and the distress within those districts intensified. We have freed ourselves from these pernicious laws, but in many places a very similar effect is produced by voluntary efforts. In our large towns especially the stagnation of labour where it is not needed is intensified, and the consequent distress greatly enhanced, by the promiscuous charity which is poured in upon the affected district. Instead of being urged, and indeed driven by necessity, to seek their work elsewhere, the "unemployed" are encouraged in a hopeless waiting upon Providence and odd jobs; and many of them are quick to learn that by staying quietly where they are they can live without working. It is true that there is a great field in such districts for philanthropic effort, but it should be on the very different lines of helping labour to find its market, instead of holding out inducements to it to stay.

A new difficulty has arisen for the working-class in the increased prevalence of what has been called the "long-vacation system." It is becoming more and more the case throughout the industrial world that during some part of the year at any rate there will be a "slack time," a time, that is, when there

will be little or no work, and therefore little or no wages. It is not necessarily altogether bad that this should be so; it is good for every one to have an occasional holiday. But a holiday that is accompanied by grinding poverty is no holiday, and probably involves a lowering of the standard from which the worker may never recover. This may be the case even when the annual income is quite sufficient, if the worker has not learnt the art of equalising his income throughout the year, the art of making the fat months contribute to the thin months. The rate at which the wage-earning class as a whole will make further progress appears likely to depend largely upon their ability to learn this art.

An attempt has been made sometimes, as *e.g.* at Basle, to enforce the lesson upon them by compelling contributions to an insurance fund against "out-of-work." The plan has not yet proved its success, and some of the difficulties seem obvious. It is clear, for instance, that the managers of such a fund, especially when it is subsidised by the State, will have to guard very carefully against members throwing themselves out of work in order to enjoy its benefits. On the other hand, the man who desires to "better himself" must be free to leave his work when he sees a chance of improving his position. On the whole, it seems likely that wage-earners are more likely to make successful provision for themselves than any one else to do it for them. Already they have organised insurance against loss of work occasioned by illness, by means of the Friendly Societies; and to a con-

siderable extent they have organised insurance against loss of work through other causes by means of Trade Unions. If once the need is thoroughly realised, there seems little reason to doubt that, either by private arrangement of their incomes, or by some similar organisation, they will ultimately provide also against periodical loss of employment, and thus convert a season of poverty into one of rest and refreshment.

## II

### THE LINES OF INDUSTRIAL CONFLICT

It has long been a part of the economic creed that the lines of Industrial Conflict lie between Capital and Labour; but there are in the industrial world of to-day not a few indications which suggest that the battles of industry tend to bring into conflict different industrial classes rather than different social classes, and that this tendency is not only increasing but is being recognised and accepted. Before the "organisation of labour" the struggles between individual masters and men were the most striking features in modern industry, and concealed for the most part the underlying forces; now the war between individuals has disappeared for good or for evil,<sup>1</sup> and with it much of the old significance of the rivalry between Capital and Labour. What we now find is an industrial field whereon employers and workmen stand in armed neutrality, with a balance of power so nicely adjusted that the least encroachment on either side may throw the whole industry out of gear for weeks or months pending a re-adjustment. As it becomes increasingly difficult for any disturbance from with-

<sup>1</sup> See "The Method of Collective Bargaining," *Economic Journal*, March 1896.

out to be compensated by a re-arrangement of internal relations, the tendency is for each organised group to maintain its own internal economy as against any change from the outside world, and frequently this can only be done by passing on the shock to less compactly organised bodies. For the indefinite margin between wages and profits, which shifted to and fro as conditions of supply and demand enabled one side to encroach upon the other, disappears as the workman erects his standard to mark the line beyond which he will not retreat, while his idea of profits as an indefinitely expansive territory upon which he may advance, breaks down before his fuller knowledge of the trade. It was thus, for instance, that in the coal strike of 1893 the battle as between Capital and Labour came to a deadlock, and the workmen, recognising that their standard could not be maintained as against profits, insisted that the warfare should be directed against the community in a rise of prices.<sup>1</sup>

If such a policy succeeds it will be at the expense of the community at large. In such a case as this it is not profits which suffer by the rise in wages, for not unless profits are secured will the system be able to maintain its elasticity against the exigencies of commercial life; and thus it becomes once more evident (as in the breaking down of the Wage Fund theory) that there is no natural antagonism between Profits and Wages, Capital and Labour.

It might have been thought that the tendency towards such a movement would always appear under

<sup>1</sup> See "The Lock-Out in the Coal Trade," *Economic Journal*, 1893.

some such circumstances as that of the coal strike, the labourer bringing pressure to bear upon the employer to force him to raise prices; but in the "New Trades' Combination Movement" we have an instructive illustration of the way in which Capital and Labour may combine voluntarily, and without any preliminary tussle, into a compact fighting body.

A brief summary of this movement is to be found in a leaflet reprinted from the *Furniture and Decoration and Furniture Gazette* (March 15, 1897), and a fuller account in a pamphlet published in 1895, and consisting of five articles reprinted from the *Birmingham Daily Post*. In the first of these articles, the chief promoter of the movement, Mr. E. J. Smith, states the problem of the difficulties of combining a "living wage" with a "living profit," and gives a gloomy sketch of the commercial prospects of the country. Over-production, unremunerative prices, deterioration of quality, and markets filled with inferior articles, he regards as the characteristics of the time, and all these evils he traces to an inordinate desire on the part of business men to take large orders at any price and to cut out everybody else. "The idea is that nothing but a large output can produce profit, and the intention is to secure it at any cost." In consequence "profits grow less year by year," and the problem is "to find out a way whereby we can trade on safe and profitable lines, which will not drive away our trade, but which will give everybody a better chance, and, while satisfying all reasonable demands from the side of labour, will ensure at

least some fair and reasonable amount of profit on all business done, whether much or little."

The second article, which is perhaps the most interesting of the series, is an analysis of "Cost-taking." To the outsider it seems almost incredible that the business-man should actually not know whether he is selling at a profit or not, but we are assured that "there are few trades which do not contain a number of members who have no adequate plan of fixing the line between profit and loss." . . . "Many business men . . . fail to see the necessity for accurately ascertaining the real cost of an article upon which they must place a market value. It is a common practice for firms just commencing business not only to copy other people's goods, but to take other people's price lists." Further, "a lower list is generally adopted in order to get a connection, under the fond delusion that the connection once obtained better prices can be secured. The only result is the general lowering of the market price and the consequent lessening of profit to the whole trade."

The remedy suggested is, first, that in every trade a system of taking out costs should be adopted, and all selling prices arrived at from this basis. In the next place, a minimum profit should be fixed, and no man permitted to take less.

The result of carrying out these two stipulations is not at once clear, but we are told that it would not bring about uniform price lists, inasmuch as "some would sell at lower prices than others, according to the quality of the goods sold . . . all that would be

insisted upon would be that, whatever the selling price, it bore the proportion of profit on dead cost agreed to."

But again, we must also take into consideration the variations in cost of production due to working on a large or small scale, or to different capacities of the business-men themselves in buying, etc.; and these variations, we understand, are not to be represented in price, but are to accrue in the shape of extra returns to the particular firm. "Should the most favoured buyer use his advantage by selling his goods at lower prices, or should he keep the difference? At present it is given away in nearly every trade. Why?"

Article three, after dwelling upon the mutual distrust of business-men in the same trade, goes on to suggest ten principles upon which a combination should be formed. These principles ensure amongst other things, that no one shall sell without profit, that this profit shall be fixed at a "safe and reasonable amount," and that it shall be shared "in proper proportions" by every one representing either Capital or Labour engaged in the trade. These proportions are to be fixed by an arrangement as to wages at the outset, and based upon that a sliding scale or bonus, varying with the returns.

How far these principles are to be enforced within a trade, or only voluntarily adopted, is not quite clear. The members of a trade must not compel any one to join an association who has conscientious scruples, but "in self-defence they must insist upon

profitable prices being charged, and fair wages being paid." What this practically means was seen in Birmingham not long ago, when a large metal works was beleaguered in an attempt to force the men into coming out until their employers should join the association.

In article four, the question of wages, which has been so far concealed behind that of profits, is brought forward. Through their Wages Board the work-people are to have a voice in the question of selling prices, "they must have the right to consider any proposal to alter them." This, together with the fixing of a standard wage, to be taken into account in determining the selling price, and the addition of a bonus, constitutes the advantage to the workmen in the new partnership; for it is distinctly an alliance between masters and men as against the community at large which is contemplated: "The one great principle of the alliance between masters and men is that they agree to support each other. The men will not accept employment under any one in the trade who refuses to get a fair profit on his goods, and the employers refuse to employ an employé who has not joined his trade association." The same point is urged in the smaller leaflet. "It is equally obvious, too, that if strong combinations of employers and employed are formed, they can bring to bear an irresistible force either upon dissentient employers or dissentient work-people, to compel them to conform to regulations by which a fair price and fair wages can be obtained."

The scheme is deserving of attention, if only because it has already been realised to some considerable extent. It is claimed that the whole bedstead trade in this country is conducted upon this system, and that many other trades have followed the example; indeed the movement is said to have succeeded among "industries representing probably one-half the artisans of Birmingham," and there are no doubt certain features in it, besides the increase in wages, which are very attractive. To diminish factitious cheapness due to selling at a loss (whether through ignorance or competition) must tend to steady trade, and so far the new scheme might benefit the whole community, as well as the particular section directly involved. But it is clear that the present intention of the producer is to reap his advantage at the expense of the consumer. It would have been open to the promoters of the scheme to urge that by better organisation of the trade they would really lessen the cost of production, *e.g.* by avoiding the loss of capital involved in numerous small failures; but so far as I am aware this line of defence has not been adopted. Nor has the common argument that a higher standard for the workmen will really increase the quantity and quality of the work, been brought forward. The gain is to accrue to the producers alone, and it is to result from a forced rise in prices. This of course can only be maintained ultimately by control and probably restriction of the output; a policy which is clearly contemplated in Mr. Smith's preliminary discussion on over-production.

To create a monopoly, then, is the object of the producers who adopt this system. How far it is possible for it to become universal, and for a monopoly to be maintained in every branch of production, would be an interesting problem to consider; but for my present purpose the chief interest lies in the clear recognition involved in it, of the fact that the real lines of industrial warfare are not between Capital and Labour, but between different sections of producers. It is not sufficient to say, between producer and consumer, for the great majority of consumers are producers whose powers of consumption are limited by the returns they get for themselves as producers. And in so far as organisation on these lines is successful the struggle for higher returns (profits and wages) will approach again to the economic bargain between individuals having a monopoly of goods to exchange; with two important differences.

1. Though the seller will be practically one, the buyers will be many.

2. The seller, though one inasmuch as competition will be excluded, will not be able to control the market completely. An individual can withhold any part of his commodity, and thus raise the price for each unit to the very highest the buyers will give; but in this case all holders will be keen to be first in the field, and the whole amount will be in the market at once. Hence though the producers may by agreement maintain a high minimum price, they will be unable to create an artificial famine,

unless by a closer organisation than is at present contemplated.

But though the competition amongst producers to be first in the market (which might lead to a great development in advertising) would remain, *externally* there would only be the competition of alternative commodities (as for example in the great increase in the use of oil-stoves during the coal strike). This might, however, be a considerable check on the monopolists if there were any great impetus to ingenuity in discovering substitutes.

But the main point would be that the labourers could no longer fail to see that industrial rivalry lies between themselves. While the policy is confined to one or a few industries, this is not so obvious. The hardship caused by a rise in the price of coal, spread as it would be over the whole community, might be insignificant as compared with the benefit to be reaped by a relatively small number of miners and coal-owners. But as the movement spread, and the miner found, not only firing, but clothing, light, food, and tools, all rising in price, he must recognise that it becomes merely a question as to which group of producers can enforce the best terms for itself against other groups of producers.

There can be little doubt which this would be. Where a monopoly is concerned the intensity of the buyers' need, combined with a knowledge of that need on the part of the seller, must always play a principal part in determining the rate of exchange. Hence the producers of the *necessaries* of life, as soon

as they discovered their powers, would be able to increase their returns almost indefinitely at the expense of the community. In the absence of competition the total utility of a commodity will make itself felt, and the food, clothing, building, etc., industries, in so far as they were successful in organising, would be able to make the best terms for themselves. (As a question of practical politics, no doubt foreign competition might continue to make this impossible in England, so far as food is concerned; but if the food industries failed to meet this difficulty, and should be the only ones unorganised, they must sooner or later cease to exist and England become completely dependent on foreign countries for her food supply.) A community, therefore, which was completely organised on these lines, would be a community in which the necessities of life were very expensive as compared with its luxuries.

It may of course be doubted whether the fullest recognition of the true lines of industrial warfare will ever lead any group of producers to be content with less, if they can see their way to make good their claims to more. But it should at any rate alter the lines of social and economic discussions. Instead of the rival merits of "Capital and Labour," or of employer and of employé, we shall soon be discussing the rival merits of different branches of production, the comparative value of different kinds of luxury for the community at large, and the extent to which the production of mere necessities should be allowed to play an important part in the life of a community.

For instance, whether it is better to have an abundance of cheap necessities, and a large population living chiefly on them,<sup>1</sup> or a small population of whom the greater part have both necessities and luxuries. We might anticipate on paper great changes; such as that the Residuum if left to itself would be rapidly starved out of existence, that the agricultural labourer would raise his income more than proportionally to the increased cost of food, and have a larger margin for luxuries, while tailors, shoemakers, weavers, miners, etc., would achieve a like success. Birmingham would perhaps be the greatest sufferer by the change she has initiated, for who would wear "Brummagem jewellery" if it were expensive? And all that part of the community which was *not* concerned in the production of necessities would have a smaller margin for luxuries; so that we might perhaps expect that the ultimate result of the substitution of the problem of Exchange for that of Distribution would be that Distribution itself would tend to greater equality.

Arnold Toynbee in his *Industrial Revolution* says (p. 84): "Finally, in the distribution of wealth there must necessarily be a permanent antagonism of interests. Adam Smith himself saw this, when he said that the rate of wages depended on contracts between two parties whose interests were not identical."

In a further analysis of the question (p. 119) he says: "The division of the produce, on the other hand,

<sup>1</sup> See Prof. Geddes in *The Claims of Labour*, and elsewhere.

is determined mainly by the proportion of labourers seeking employment and the quantity of capital seeking investment; or, to put the case in a somewhat different way, instead of saying that wages are paid out of stored-up capital, we now say that they are the labourer's share of the produce. What the labourer's share will be depends first on the quantity of produce he can turn out, and secondly, on the nature of the bargain which he is able to make with his employer."

If it is no longer true (and perhaps it never was true, in any but a superficial sense) that the interests of the "two parties" concerned in the production of a commodity are not identical, it will be necessary to find some theory of wages which is more expressive of the facts than the mere bargain between master and man. "Wages are the labourer's share of the produce." Yes, but not of his *own* produce; and speaking literally, they never were this. It is the share of other people's produce which he has always needed, and which he now sees himself able to increase. And his ability to increase it will depend—partly no doubt on the nature of the bargain (or alliance) which he can make with his employer; but chiefly and essentially on the nature of the bargain he and his employer together are able to make with other producers. That is, the "antagonism of interests" as between Capital and Labour has proved itself to be *not* permanent, and if there is any permanent antagonism it is to be found between different classes of producers.

### III

## THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SOCIAL PROGRESS<sup>1</sup>

THE science of psychology has made extraordinary progress within the last half-century ; and though for a science it is still in an early stage of development, it may now fairly be said to have constructed for itself a central group of conceptions from which to work out its future. In its terminology also it has abandoned its former use of terms made vague and fluctuating in meaning by current usage, and is gradually accumulating a well-defined terminology, such as every other science achieves for itself.

So far, however, these conceptions and this exact terminology have been for the most part confined to the text-books, and have not been used, so to say, in the open air ; they have been applied only to the material collected by the professional psychologist, and the professional psychologist tends to draw his material from the limited field of instances in which his ideas are most strikingly illustrated. We have, indeed, the so-called psychological novel, which is essentially a modern product. In it, instead of being left to infer our hero's "states of mind" from his

<sup>1</sup> A paper read before the Socratic Society, Birmingham.

words and actions, as in the old times, we are led behind the scenes and shown his mental struggles much more clearly than he can ever have seen them himself; and it is conceivable that before long the play of his thoughts and feelings will be imparted to us in terms of the interaction of his apperipient masses. But so far the novelist in his analysis has kept to the old indefinite terminology, and has made no attempt to explain his motives by the use of the deeper psychological conceptions.

I have just been reading Mr. Stout's very interesting and suggestive book on psychology, and thought it might be interesting to take two or three of the conceptions elaborated and explained in it and in Mr. James's book, and see whether they would give any interesting results when applied to some of our economic and social problems. Of course, in so far as they are true and adequate conceptions, they are already implied in those problems, and nothing more is necessary than to suggest their bearings, and see how far they coincide with popular and academic conceptions on the same subject.

But first of all I want to point out that between psychology and sociology there is no line to be drawn. The latter science, if science it can yet be called, is based upon psychological analysis; the question as to how societies are formed can only be answered by appeal to the nature of men's minds; while those minds themselves which are the material of psychology are developed by living in societies. Let me quote from Maudsley's *Pathology of Mind*, pp. 21, 22 :

✓ "To live in social relations implies a social nature within as well as a social medium without, for were there no community of kind such inter-relation could not be. Envy, emulation, malice, hatred, vanity, ambition, and the like human passions, exist only in relation to beings of the same kind; even a fool does not envy a good-looking horse or hate an ill-doing machine. Because all men are of one kind they are so infected by a panic of terror among themselves that they behave as foolishly and frantically as a flock of silly sheep, but they are not similarly affected by a panic amongst sheep. . . . Lacking a social medium for its nurture and display, hysteria would not attack the solitary inhabitant of a desert island; it would hardly be inspired to perform to the unheeding stars. In the absence of their proper stimuli, how can the fit reflexes take effect?"

In considering psychological conceptions, then, we are considering the bases of sociological science, and those conceptions themselves can only be really understood in connection with social relations.

Man, it has been said, but I cannot remember by whom, is distinguished from the lower animals by his capacity for progressive wants. The lower animals have a certain larger or smaller cycle of desires, which being satisfied are quiescent, and incapable of further satisfaction until the same cycle begins again and runs its course of craving and satisfaction. With men, on the contrary, the satisfaction of the primitive wants may lead on through a constantly widening

range of what we are pleased to call "higher wants"; in such wise that there seems to be absolutely no limit to their capacity for receiving new satisfactions. When men have their fill of food and clothing, they begin to desire luxuries and ornaments; when their appetites are satisfied, they turn their attention to dancing and music; the poet, the story-teller, and the artist then find a demand for their services, and so on until the primitive cycle may be almost lost sight of.

It is a truism to point out that this capacity for always discovering new wants is a necessary condition of human progress. Had it been possible to satisfy our natures with mere sufficiency of food and clothing we should still be living in caves, huddled up in bear-skins and devouring the flesh of wild animals. Whether civilisation owes most to the discontented men who were always wanting something new, or to the ingenious men who were always discovering new ways of making themselves acceptable to their companions, does not much matter. Both were essential to the process of developing the higher nature, and though there are those who maintain that men are unfortunate in proportion as they have developed higher wants,—*i.e.* that they are better off when left undisturbed in the primitive cycle,—this opinion is not yet widely accepted.

But the fact that there are exceptions to the rule, that certain men would seem never to pass beyond the primitive cycle, thus forming an unprogressive "knot" in the flow of human progress, makes it of

interest to inquire whether we cannot get behind the mere statement of the fact to some psychological explanation which will help us to account for the exceptions. Why is it that some people are content to pass their lives in eating, drinking, and sleeping, with intervals of comparative quiescence, and are absolutely free from the stimulus of progressive desires? There is a chapter in Mr. Stout's book which seems to me to hold the clue to such an explanation. I refer to the chapter on "Conation and Cognitive Synthesis." I will try to explain briefly what I take to be the conception expounded in these and in other parts of the book.

The stream of consciousness in the individual life is represented to us as a current, not drifting aimlessly, but always drifting towards some end, whether that end be itself in consciousness or not. To explain the existence of these "ends" towards which the stream is making, the conception is used of a "vital series,"—a conception originally applied, as I gather, in physiological connections. A "vital series" takes place when the equilibrium of mental elements has been disturbed by some shock or stimulus, and they are seeking a re-adjustment. In creatures still confined to the primitive cycle of wants the stimulus or shock will generally be due to such organic disturbances as lack of food, and the "vital series" will take the shape of a series of efforts to obtain food and so to restore the disturbed equilibrium. Then a period of more or less total quiescence or unconsciousness—corresponding to a state of mental equilibrium—will set in, until

a fresh disturbance occurs within the organism, leading to a fresh re-adjustment.

Now, among the lower animals these re-adjustments are brought about very largely by means of instincts. "The peculiar feature of the life of animals," says Mr. Stout, "which prevents progressive development is the existence of instincts, which do for them what the human being must do for himself. Their inherited organisation is such that they perform the movements adapted to supply their needs on the mere occurrence of an appropriate external stimulus."

To us these instincts have not been given. Possibly because in the early days they would have been quite inadequate to the protection of a weakly animal whose desires led him to want to eat things stronger than himself. A very simple instinct of pouncing brings the cat to the attainment of the desired mouse; the human hunter relying upon as simple an impulse would be more likely to fall a victim to his quarry.

But, whatever the reason, the fact remains that man, having no sufficient instincts for the purpose, must achieve his ends by way of consciously devised means. From him the "vital series" leading to re-adjustment is a complicated one consisting of a number of steps, any one or all of which may be fully present to consciousness. Each of these steps in turn becomes the object of our striving; not at first for its own sake, but as leading to the end in view. The important point is that, having once been an end in the subordinate sense of being a means, it is henceforward capable of becoming an end in the principal sense.

To use a simile: the traveller from London to Birmingham who goes by train will reach his end swiftly and surely, but will know little about the way he has come, and will not be tempted to travel any part of the route again until the need for going to Birmingham recurs. His journey is analogous to the instinctive action of the animal. The traveller who walks or rides will be longer on the way, and will have many difficulties to overcome; but every stage will have its interest for him. He will note *x* as being a good place to come for a short tour; and *y* as an interesting branch road to explore; and *z* as actually capable of yielding more satisfaction than Birmingham itself. Thus, every journey he takes will open up to him new possibilities for the future.

In a similar way every conation towards an end, however simple, that passes through conscious steps or "means," may open up fresh routes for future conations to pursue. Any one of the steps may achieve an independent interest and become desired for itself,—*e.g.* the hunter glories in the chase long after his larder is full; the workman who takes up his handicraft for the sake of a living may come to enjoy it for its own sake; and the schoolboy who plies his task to avoid punishment becomes the scholar whom nothing can bribe to leave it. It is often noticed that the busier people are the more work they tend to undertake; while idle people are very hard to move. The real antithesis is not so much between busy and idle men as between men of many interests and men of few. Every living interest opens the way

to new ones, and the more energetically they are followed up the more possibilities reveal themselves. In fact, we must all have noticed that it is fatal to our peace of mind to take a keen interest in anything at all. The more often the mental equilibrium is disturbed the more it is exposed to fresh disturbances in the way of fresh interests.

How then account for any exceptions? Why do we find some people who show no signs of being progressive in their interests, and others who are actually limited to the primitive cycle, and seem incapable of breaking through it? In other words, how do people manage to achieve for their minds such a stable equilibrium as to become practically stationary?

For animals, we have said, instinct does it. Of course, their equilibrium is disturbed by the primitive cycle of recurrent wants, but it is restored again by simple instinctive action which does not trouble the mind with new interests. For them life, though not actually stationary (that would be a contradiction in terms), is not progressive, but repeats itself like a recurring decimal.

What instinct does for the animal, habit tends to do for man. In proportion as the means by which we reach our ends becomes easy and familiar it tends to become habitual, and unconscious in so far as each step ceases to attract special attention to itself. The vital series then takes place automatically; we are again travelling by train, quickly and surely, with little chance of losing the way, but also with no chance of opening up new ways. Then we also tend

to become recurring decimals. We all know, probably, what it is to look back upon some period of our lives which seems to us now to have been full of possibilities, but which we passed through in an almost apathetic state, simply because we had become too habituated to it to notice. Then some great change or shock is forced upon the life, and it is obliged to enter upon new ways, which may ultimately lead it into an altogether new world of interest.

Of course there is an immense gain if, *after* we have developed the higher interests, we can relegate the lower ones to automatic action. Then we send on our heavy luggage by train and leave ourselves free to explore new regions. But the danger is that the mind should never have broken through the primitive cycle, or should have been allowed to become automatic at a low level. The child who is never made to do things for himself, to find the solution to his own problems, will be slow to develop higher interests; also the man whose trust in Providence or his relations has taken the place occupied by instinct in the lower animals; and the same stationary condition must be expected in the man whose energies are so exhausted in satisfying the elementary needs that he never has a chance of following the suggestions to higher ones.

Mental struggle, then, is the first law of progress. Peace of mind must be left to the lower animals, if by peace of mind we mean nothing but freedom from cares and contrivings, puzzles and desires, and "obstinate questionings" of all kinds. What the child, the

family, the whole community needs is constant disturbance of their mental equilibrium, combined with the necessity of consciously devising *for themselves* the vital series which is to bring renewed stability,—*i.e.* the satisfaction of desire. If any individual or class is cut off from this necessity, whether by the stagnation of habit, or the crushing weight of circumstance, or because they are unfortunate enough to have all their wants anticipated, they are as much cut off from the possibility of developing higher interests as the jelly-fish or the penny-in-the-slot automaton.

Now, I am well aware that we hear a great deal about the over-strain of modern life, and we are told sometimes that the great mass of the people have no time to lead a higher life; we are even threatened with an enormous increase of insanity, owing to the high pressure at which we live. My own impression is that, as I have been arguing, this high pressure is nearly all to the good, and infinitely more hopeful than any approach to stagnation. In support of this opinion, I will quote from Maudsley's *Pathology of Mind*, pp. 29, 30 :

“The full and varied exercise of mind elicited by a variety of interests is no less conducive to health and strength of mind than a full and varied exercise of body is to its health and strength. The intellect suffers more from rusting in disuse than it ever does from its utmost use. One fact which the statistics of insanity in England has clearly shown is, that the purely agricultural counties furnish the largest per-

centage of insanity in proportion to the population ; that is to say, there is most madness where there are the fewest ideas, the most simple feelings, and the coarsest desires and ways. . . . Railways and steamboats may have done more to prevent insanity by the variety, than they have done to produce it by the hurry, of life which they have occasioned. The more numerous and various the impressions to which a mind is subject in the complex relations of life, the less likely is its balance to be upset by the exaggerated preponderance of any one of them."

The next conception of which I shall speak is that of *apperception*, in the modern sense of the term. It seems to me to throw much light on the way in which the mind develops, and therefore to be of great practical importance to all who are either interested in or desirous of influencing the mental development of others.

The old idea of the mind, we shall remember, was that of a clear surface becoming gradually written over with the experiences of life in much the same way as this sheet of paper was gradually written over, one line after the other. Or, to take a better illustration, the conception was more like that of a nursery screen which is pasted all over with a medley of pictures bearing no special relation to each other. (One of the older philosophers—Malebranche, I believe—spoke of ideas as actual substances, emanating from objects and adhering to or in the minds with which they happened to come in contact.)

In place of this crude idea of a mind which is being pieced together from the outside, there is now substituted that of a growing and organic system of ideas, thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and emotions; developing, indeed, from the simplest germ, but from first to last influencing its own development by its selection of the elements which are to enrich it, and by its influence upon them. The process is analogous to that by which a plant appropriates nourishment from the surrounding soil and atmosphere. Its growth depends upon the elements received from without, but, while they affect its growth and constitution, it in turn completely transforms their characteristics in the process of assimilation.

Mr. Stout's definition of apperception is "the process by which a mental system appropriates a new element, or otherwise receives a fresh determination." The essence of the process, and that to which I wish to call special attention, is that it is not a mere addition of new to old, but that the appropriation of new by old involves modification of both.

The modification of old by new is a more or less familiar conception to us. We speak of a man's views and opinions changing and mellowing with experience, and we feel, as we look back to younger days, how much the years have done to alter the organisation and temper of our own minds. But we must carry this principle down from generalities into detail, and recognise that every new perception of whatever kind, in so far as it is fairly taken into the mind, is not only "one more" unit there, but alters

the constitution of the whole group of ideas into which it is received.

Now the blending of new and old being of this intimate kind has for consequence :

1. That nothing of a totally new nature *can* be received into the mind ; it is impossible to give a new idea to minds not in some way prepared for it. Just as the plant can only assimilate the nourishment suited to it, so the mind can only accept elements to which there is already something analogous in its constitution. Where the new perception is only *relatively* new, has in it some familiar elements, it will be apperceived or received by that part of the mental system which is similar ; and it is by this way of partial similarity or identity that the mind grows.

2. What the mind sees depends upon what it already is. The town child who called a fern a pot of green feathers *could* not see what the country child or what the botanist would see, but saw what its past experience enabled it to see. Thus there is a tremendous tendency for the mind in receiving new experiences to change them into something more like what it already possesses. Indeed, in so far as it does receive them, it *must* so change them. The disappearance of the savage before civilisation is said to be largely due to his sheer inability to "take in" all the new ideas and objects by which he is confronted ; the mind is killed by its futile efforts. But where the novelty is less overwhelming there is no limit to the ingenuity of the mind in interpreting, or

misinterpreting, what it sees by what it already knows, so that it may come to some sort of understanding: a fact which is full of significance with respect to the success or failure of foreign missions.

This is what makes intercourse between people of different "upbringings" apt to be difficult, and should make us specially careful in placing our ideas before minds less developed (or differently developed) than our own, without making sure how they are interpreted. "One man's meat is another's poison" is far truer in the spiritual than in the physical world.

How does this tell on our question of social development? *Primâ facie*, it seems to tend greatly against the possibility of our achieving any state of society in which the units shall be all the same; shall be, that is, individuals having the same views, interests, and mental experiences. For in the mental life differentiation is cumulative; not only do no two minds ever perceive an object the same way, but their perceiving it differently introduces a further element of difference into the mind which will affect all after experience.

And yet we all live in the same world, and *do* have similar views about it, and *are* able to come to some sort of understanding about our interests. That I take to be due mainly to two facts:

1. That certain fundamental characteristics of affection and gregariousness form a common basis upon which all individual life is erected.

2. That we are rational beings, and therefore share

in a common mental organisation which is reflected into our social organisation. *Difference of detail does not involve difference of structure.* Two kinds of roses may differ in almost every external detail, but none the less both are roses.

I have only time to deal with the second of these facts,—that of our common mental organisation. This is a conception which seems to have been entirely left out of sight by our Associationist Psychologists. J. S. Mill tells us in his autobiography how he regards his father's most important work to be the fundamental doctrine of the formation of all character by circumstance, through the universal principle of association; through, that is, the association of pleasure with beneficial, and pain with injurious action. If this were a sufficient account of the matter, the well-trained dog or idiot should be as capable of developing character as the wisest man, for in both the principle of association can be made active.

But the once famous principle of association is now being relegated to its proper place as the mere machinery by which higher principles of organisation develop. It is recognised that in proportion as the mind reaches higher stages of development it ceases to consist of mere trains of perceptions, thoughts, and ideas linked together by associations of time, space, and similarity, and has a definitely organised and complex content, dominated in its workings by definite interests and principles. *Noetic synthesis* is the term which Mr. Stout uses to describe this

organisation in the higher levels of intelligence. "In any given stage of thought," he tells us (vol. ii. p. 3), "the next step is partly determined by the controlling influence of the central idea of the topic with which the whole series is concerned, and partly by the special idea which has last emerged. In so far as it is determined by the special idea which has last emerged, the principle of association is operative: in so far as it is determined by the central idea of the whole topic, noetic synthesis is operative."

All purposive, rational thought and action, then, is guided by noetic synthesis; all casual, aimless speech or action, all chatter or punning or mere trifling, much narrative, and, again, all automatic action, is guided by association alone.

Those who have listened much to the talk of uneducated women know what an aimless trickle of associated trifles it is apt to be. The listener can find no rational clue to the thought by which it is prompted; it is a narrative of utterly insignificant sayings and doings, only saved by some kind of observance of time sequence from descending into the meaningless jargon of the idiot. There is nothing to show that the minds of many men do not drift in just the same way, though they find less ready utterance in speech. Their lives certainly show the same absence of "noetic synthesis"; day drifts after day in the same aimless fashion, all is ordered by habit, chance, association; nothing by purpose. Theirs is the very type of character formed by the great principle of association, for at every movement they

sedulously avoid the immediately unpleasant and seek the immediately pleasant. Let us quote from Mr. Stout's *Psychology*, p. 34 :

“The varying degrees of noetic synthesis . . . broadly correspond to the degree of intelligence of the individual, either in general or in special directions. The more developed it is, the less conspicuous by comparison is the part played by association. A person of disciplined intelligence in narrating an occurrence brings together the really relevant points as parts of a systematic whole, discarding whatever is superfluous. A country yokel seems unable to proceed otherwise than by casual associations of proximity in time and space. The important items are for him so embedded in a flood of irrelevant details that it is difficult to disentangle from his chaotic narrative the essential circumstances. In other words, there is present in the one case a mental synthesis which is absent in the other.”

Now this mental synthesis corresponds to a higher and more complex grouping of mental contents. Experience, as it comes to a mind of this type, ranges itself in subordination to the principles and purposes which are dominant, and the conception of a mere stream of consciousness develops into that of a *mental system*.

We may picture this systematisation of the mind as a grouping of mental elements according to the various topics or interests which predominate ; much as in highly civilised communities men are grouped

according to their interests into families, clubs, unions, nationalities, religious and political sects, and so on. The higher the type of mind and the development of character, the more complex and complete will be its organisation according to interests and purposes.

If this newer conception of mental organisation be a true one, it seems clear that the principle of association, as translated into a system of rewards and punishments, will not do more than develop a quite commonplace type of character. It may be the best means we can use in certain directions towards restraining tendencies which would otherwise be injurious to the community; as a positive and educational principle it is of little use. All wise teachers, I believe, recognise now that the best way of dealing with naughty children is to absorb their whole attention with some *interest*, which will not only leave no energy to spare for naughtiness, but will of itself tend to organise their minds, to subordinate mental elements to a *purpose*, and so to develop character.

Again, why is it that some of us think it undesirable that rich people, or the State, should play the part of special Providence to the poor? The lazy answer reverts to the principle of association and says, "you must let them feel the consequences of being drunken, or idle, or improvident, and then they will strive harder against it." But this clearly applies only to some few among the poor, and even with reference to those few indicates only the begin-

ning of the better things we hope for. The fuller answer is, that for every man interests naturally arise which are capable of organising his life and developing his character, the interests of supplying his own wants—higher and lower—and those of his family; and if these interests are taken out of his hands, without the introduction of others equally powerful, he is simply left to drift without the possibility of development. The only way of really helping a man is to strengthen him by education, timely assistance, opportunities, what you will, to meet his own difficulties and organise his own life; and so also of any class in the community, only by their own activities can they develop progressive interests, and only by purposes and progressive interests can they organise their lives successfully.

We might apply the same idea to political education. We shall hardly make much advance in this direction until our politicians cease to appeal solely or mainly to the special desires of their constituents,—which is really nothing but the system of rewards (*i.e.* bribes) over again,—and seek to interest them in wider issues. So far as people are encouraged and helped to devise ways of meeting their own needs they must necessarily find their way sooner or later to the wider issues; but so far as material benefactions are forced upon them from without, they will no doubt accept them, but will lose in progressive power more than they gain in material wealth.

Take as one instance out of many the question of

old age pensions, which at one time threatened to become the chief political interest of the day. It is in no sense a scheme devised by the class which would benefit, nor have they shown any energy in pushing it or in devising ways and means. Of course they will take it when offered, and of course they will like a candidate for election better for offering than for opposing it. But for the very reason that it comes as a windfall from without, having nothing to do with their own plans, it may do little to really improve their position; while it will cut them off from one department of energetic development in which very good results had already begun to appear.

Finally, a conception which I take to be all important from the point of view of social progress is that of the wider self; or, as we may call it, the elastic self. What do we mean by the self? Some have been known to say it is the body, others that it is the mind or soul, others again, the mind or soul *plus* the body. From a psychological point of view it is enough to say that it is the mind or soul, and that includes the body and much more beside, for it includes all experience. The soul literally is, or is built up of, all its experience; and such part of this experience, or soul life, as is active at any given time or for any given purpose constitutes the self at that time and for that purpose. We know how the self enlarges and expands as we enter upon new duties, acquire new interests, contract new ties of friendship; we know how it is mutilated when some sphere of activity is cut off, or some near friend snatched

away by death. It is literally, and not metaphorically, a part of *ourselves* which we have lost.

But if, then, all we know is self, what shall we do with our useful old words, selfish and unselfish? For practical purposes, of course, we can use them just as before. The important point is that to a great extent we get rid of the apparent incompatibility between egoism and altruism, between the so-called self-regarding and extra-regarding conduct. The unselfish nature becomes now the self with wider interests, or the self in which the wider interests predominate over the narrower. The father who feels himself more mutilated by loss of wife and family than by loss of a limb does so, not because he is specially altruistic, but because his family was a far more vital part of his self than his limb. The loss of reputation, or injury to the social self, is worse to many than the loss of health or injury to the material self. The patriot who sacrifices all private interests to the welfare of his country has subordinated the narrower self to the wider. We no longer, therefore, need to teach self-abnegation, but the enlarging of the self, the finding it in wider interests.

Here we are obviously at a point where psychology merges into sociology; indeed, we cannot draw any line between them. Suppose we have two men whose more important interests are the same; who strive for the same ends, are actuated by the same motives, and respond in the same way to a given stimulus. In so far as this is the case they have a

common self, or their interests are so organised as to be correlative to each other; they play into each other in such a way as to supplement and support, so that neither is itself without the other to complete it. This, of course, is the secret of family life; and this, when we take it over a wider circle, is the justification for the theory of the general will of a community.

The self varies with time and occasion according to the mental elements or apperceptive masses which predominate. In other words, we are ruled by different motives, desires, and affections according to the circumstances under which we are placed. Sometimes we undergo the painful experience of having two sets of motives struggling for predominance, and according as the self is well or ill organised the result will be heroic or disastrous. Do we always realise how much heroism is involved in a strike in those cases where the men subordinate their own material needs and domestic affections,—not from fear of the union, but from a true recognition of wider issues? They may sometimes be mistaken heroes, but they are heroes none the less; and there is no limit to the possible progress of a community of men with powers such as these.

But this progress may be indefinitely retarded if the motives by which they are actuated are not themselves progressive, and such as will lead to a continuously wider development of the self. Any propaganda, for instance, which appeals only or mainly to material needs, will fail to raise its followers

to any high level of civilisation or happiness, for it is concentrating the attention of the self on comparatively narrow and unprogressive issues. And any propaganda which thrives by the inculcation of class hatred and jealousy works for the destruction of its disciples as surely as for that of the community; for hatred and jealousy are disintegrating forces leading alike to madness in the individual self and civil wars in the state.

All one-sided and emotional teaching (*irrational* teaching) has this disintegrating effect. At first it may seem successful; the mind seems to acquire new experience and to respond to new motives, and only time can show whether the interests and the motives are such as will enable it to organise life successfully,—*i.e.* in correspondence with the wider interests of the community. For instance, to illustrate by extreme cases, under certain conditions, such as the influence of some strong emotion, certain elements of the self can be maintained in predominance to the total exclusion of others, which are, technically speaking, *inhibited*,—prevented from coming into action. This is the explanation of one type of conversion, such as that practised by the Salvation Army. Experience seems to show that there is no permanence in conversions of this type, unless supplemented by the acquisition of really rational and organising ideas. The bad self is merely stupefied or drugged, and sooner or later reasserts itself with all its old power. Cases of hypnotism are analogous; almost all the mental elements are lulled into stupor; the

self becomes identified with one small group of presentations dominated by the operator, who thus acquires complete power over his attenuated victim. But influence of this kind can have no real organising power over the true life; it works by suppression and not by development; and is always liable to be frustrated by anything which arouses the fuller and wider self.

So with much of the teaching which is offered to our working-classes to-day. It gains its influence not by presenting them with wider issues and stronger sympathies, which would enable them to harmonise their lives with that of the community, and so to share in as well as to advance its progress; but by concentrating the attention of the class upon its narrower self, and by exciting disintegrating emotions. The elements of a prosperous and progressive community must play into, support, and recognise each other, just as the elements of a sane and progressive mind must support and recognise each other. The growth of wider interests should mean, not the suppression, but the fuller development of narrower ones; and what is needed in social as in individual life is the introduction of organising and not of disintegrating ideas.

## IV

# ORIGIN AND HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH POOR LAW

TO THE BEGINNING OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

### 1. *The Conditions under which the Poor Law developed*

It is characteristic of social organisations which have attained to a certain degree of complexity that any sudden development or unprepared change in the industries by which they are supported, tends to break up the industrial ranks preparatory to their reorganisation in a form more suited to the new conditions. A change of this kind always makes itself felt through the community at large, and however great the benefits derived from it by the community as a whole, it is seldom that it does not entail suffering upon some one class.<sup>1</sup> This class is not necessarily that of the labourer; if the new industry is sufficiently similar to the old to absorb all the labourers previously engaged, or if any external cause concurs to diminish their numbers, it may well be that they will take up a stronger posi-

<sup>1</sup> This fact is recognised in a curious document issued by the Privy Council in 1595, urging the enforced observation of fast-days, because of the numbers connected with the fishing trade who were thrown out of work since less fish was eaten (quoted by Ribton-Turner, p. 124).

tion than before ; as, for instance, in the second half of the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries. On the other hand, it may be that the change is one to which the adult labourer cannot adapt himself, and it then happens that we get an outcast class for whom there is no function in the industrial organism. Whether it disappears in the course of the next generation, or whether it perpetuates itself as a parasite upon the community, largely depends upon how it is handled by the community, and it is in the attempt to deal with this question that the Poor Law, with all its problems of administration, has arisen.

There are two main tendencies in its development. On the one hand, it is moulded by the feeling that all human beings, even though they may have fallen out of the industrial ranks, are still members of the community, and as such cannot be allowed to perish. On the other hand, by the dread that the class should not only become permanently outcast, but that it should even increase in numbers, unless checked by deterrent measures. It is where the two tendencies are fairly balanced that we get the best development of the Poor Law as at once deterrent and constructive, and as aiming primarily at restoring the outcast class to its status in the community.

The first half of the sixteenth century was one of the periods when great social changes had thrown out of the industrial ranks large numbers of men who became both a terror and a burden to the community. For a picture of the magnitude and miseries of this class we need only turn to Sir T. More's *Utopia*, or

to Harrison's *Description of England*. Speaking of "roges" the latter says: "For there is not one year commonlie, wherein three or four hundred of them are not devoured and eaten up by the gallows in one place and another. It appeareth by Cardane . . . how Henrie the eight, executing his laws verie severlie against such idle persons, I meane great theeves, pettie theeves and roges, did hang up threescore and twelve thousand of them in his time. He seemed for a while greatlie to have terrified the rest; but since his death the number of them is so increased . . . that except some better order be taken, or the laws already made be better executed, such as dwell in upland towns or little villages shall live but in small safetie and rest."

How had it come into existence at a time when, as Eden points out (p. 109), "the nation was making unexampled strides towards the attainment of opulence and industry"? Ashley (Book II. chap. v.) goes at some length into the causes. Primarily, of course, there was the agrarian revolution, the accumulation of farms into comparatively few hands, and the change from arable to pasture, which rendered outcast almost the whole class of agricultural labourers. Concurrently with this was proceeding a change in the methods of carrying on manufactures; the somewhat narrow but methodical "gild system" was being superseded by private enterprise with all its wider possibilities and greater uncertainties (see Eden, p. 106). The numbers of the "unemployed" were increased also by the tendency both of private individuals and institutions to dispense with the train of followers

and dependents, which in old days was almost the only outlet for ostentation and luxury; and finally the difficulties caused by these changes were aggravated by a series of bad harvests. The existing agencies for dealing with poverty must have failed before demands of such magnitude, even if they had remained in their full vigour; but the decline of the gilds and the arbitrary dealing of the Tudors with Church institutions left no resource but private charity. How far the monasteries had solved the problem of poor relief is an interesting question which cannot be discussed here; one thing seems certain that, at the time in question, they had proved thoroughly inadequate to this branch of their work, and are even said to have degenerated from remedying to causing poverty. It seems probable that the only injury inflicted by their dissolution upon the poor consisted in adding to the burden of the community those whom they had taught to depend upon their funds. In other words, "The Abbeyes did but maintain the poor which they made" (Fuller).<sup>1</sup>

Private charity proved, as it must always prove when uneducated and unorganised, utterly incompetent to deal with the problem. Taught by the Church that almsgiving is, in itself, a saving virtue irrespective of the merits of the case or the recipient, and frequently moved rather by fear of the "sturdy vagabond" and "valiant beggar" than by benevolence, private charity was obviously only augmenting the evil, and it became necessary

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Ribton-Turner suggests (*Vagrants and Vagrancy*, p. 85) that the 50,000 inhabitants of the religious houses must themselves have joined the ranks of the vagrant to a large extent.

for the State to intervene and definitely take upon itself the task. In doing so, it did not at first make any new departure; it merely amplified and put into force methods which were of long standing. It must be accounted a virtue, though perhaps a somewhat stern one, that the State, even when forced to recognise the existence of an outcast class, has never from the earliest times condoned it. The day when it first does so will be an evil one for the community. The early statutes of labourers were the result of an attempt—not altogether a mistaken one—to force the labourer back to the social status from which he had cast himself adrift; the Poor Law of the sixteenth century began in attempts to apply the same principle under very different conditions. That the first idea was to regulate the position of the labouring class as a whole, and not to deal with a pauper class standing wholly outside the industrial community, seems likely from the way in which, in its earlier stages, the Poor Law was mixed up with regulations of a very different kind referring to the games and dress of the people (see Burns, p. 19 *sqq.*). The statutes of labourers were intended to compel the working classes to fulfil their function in the State, and are the outcome of the old feudal system in which a definite position is assigned to every class in the community. The vagabond and idler is not to be allowed to consider himself exempt from the duties of his class, but is “to put himself to labour as a true man ought” (Burns, p. 27); and this is the keynote of the earlier legislation of the sixteenth century. The excessive

rigour of the law against crimes (72,000 "great and petty thieves were put to death during Henry's reign") was supplemented by the severity of statutes against the mode of living which gave rise to those crimes. The Act of 1536 ordains penalties of whipping, mutilation, and death upon valiant beggars and vagabonds found straying from their own parishes; and the Act of 1547 assigns similar penalties to every man or woman able to work and refusing to do so. It was in a similar spirit that the attempt was made to control private charity; alms are to be refused to vagrants in order to compel them to work (Burns, p. 22); the Act of 1536 ordains that "no person shall make any common dole, or shall give any ready money in alms otherwise than to the common boxes and common gatherings." These deterrent measures were necessarily accompanied by others of a more constructive nature. "Relief-works" were not yet within the sphere of practical politics, though Ashley mentions that "the Government had laid before the Commons the draft of a bill providing that 'sturdy beggars . . . should be set to work at the King's charge'"; but it was a standing instruction to local authorities to find employment for their own poor, and this side of the question was later on to receive much attention. But the State could not fail to recognise the existence of a large class of poor, "the impotent and poor in very deed," and having done its best to check the miscellaneous relief which this class used to share with the valiant beggars, it became incumbent upon it to make authorised pro-

vision for its needs. In this way the principle of discrimination was introduced, and a field marked off within which private charity could give free play to its benevolent instincts without endangering the welfare of the community. From the first, the principle of local responsibility was enforced, and though this developed evil consequences in the settlement laws there can be little doubt of its wisdom on the whole. At first, the State attempted merely to direct, and not to enforce, private charity. As a means of selecting the recipients, recourse was had in 1530 to the old custom (Ratzinger, *Geschichte der Kirchlichen Armenpflege*, p. 172) of granting licences to beg to those incapable of labour, with the difference that the power of granting these licences formerly exercised by the bishops was now delegated to the justices. But this licensed begging was contrary to the whole spirit of the age, and although the system survived in some parts certainly until towards the end of Elizabeth's reign, yet subsequent measures are mainly in the direction of guaranteeing provision for the incapable.

## 2. *Poor Law from 1558 to 1760*

Thus, when Elizabeth came to the throne, the course to be taken by the Poor Law was already sketched out in its main lines, and subsequent legislation only developed it on those lines. Its most important features at that time were its severity in dealing with the able-bodied poor, its prohibition of miscellaneous charity, its charge upon local authori-

ties to provide both maintenance and housing for their impotent poor, and its somewhat vague instructions to them to provide work for the honest.

It will be convenient for purposes of arrangement to trace the working of the Poor Law during the two hundred years in question under different headings, according to the class of persons with whom it attempted to deal, and the manner of its administration. Those for whom it provides in one way or another fall naturally into two classes—the able-bodied and the impotent; and these again, as legislation develops, are distinguished, the able-bodied into (1) the rogue or vagabond, and (2) the honest poor, the impotent into (3) those who are past work, or have no industrial future before them, and (4) those who are capable of future work if properly trained—the children.

Taking them in this order, we shall begin with

(A) *The Sturdy Vagabond*, who plays so large a part in industrial history in the first half of the sixteenth century. In the earlier part of Elizabeth's reign we find mention chiefly of three varieties—the vagabond, the sturdy beggar, "commonly called rogue or Egyptian," and "masterless men," having no settled means of livelihood. Between 1558 and 1601 there is little mitigation of the severe penalties against these, and the burden of proving that he was not one of them lay with the labourer who should venture to change either his place of abode or employment. By the Act 5 Eliz. he is required to provide himself with a certificate or testimonial under pain of imprisonment, and if he fails to

procure one within twenty-one days of his imprisonment, he is to be whipped and "used as a Vagabonde." On the 10th of July 1569 a "search" was ordered, primarily in Yorkshire, but also in other "suspicious" parts throughout the realm, which lasted from 9 P.M. to 4 P.M. the next day, and resulted in the capture of 13,000 masterless men (Strype, quoted by Ribton-Turner, *Vagrants and Vagrancy*, p. 104). The city of London in April of the same year had a similar search, and consigned their captives according to their condition—the vagabonds to Bridewell, the impotent to St. Bartholomew's or St. Thomas's Hospital. The manner in which the vagabonds were "used" when caught, we may learn from the Act of 1572 (14 Eliz.) entitled "An Acte for the Punishment of Vagabondes, and for Relief of the Poore and Impotent," which ordains that they are to be committed to gaol until the next session, and on conviction are "to bee greuously whipped, and burnte through the gristle of the right eare with a hot Iron of the compasse of an Inch about." Repeated convictions are punishable by death. A long list of the persons punishable under the Act is given, including those who can give no account of how they lawfully get a living. As a less direct, but perhaps more certain means of diminishing the evil, the same Act declares that "any person harbouring or giving money, lodging, or other relief to any such rogue, vagabond, or sturdy beggar, either marked or not," shall be liable to a penalty of 20s.

The cruelty of these laws can perhaps hardly be judged by our standards of to-day; they were framed

to meet a new and exceptional evil, and it is difficult to say whether anything less severe would have succeeded as well. Harrison says: "It is not yet full threescore years since this trade began; but how it has prospered since that time it is easie to judge; for they are now supposed, of one sex and another, to amount to above 10,000 persons" (quoted by Ribton-Turner, p. 119, who goes on to explain that the "trade" is that of professional mendicity carried on in a corporate fashion by organised wandering bands). They must be judged as laws, not for repressing the poor, but for checking a grave social danger.

In 1575-76 discrimination between the vagabond and "poore and needy persons being willing to worcke" appears, and Houses of Correction are organised to facilitate the punishment of the former. According to Ashley, these were put down in most parts of England before 1596,<sup>1</sup> but not, he thinks, before they had to a great extent accomplished their work, and checked the very real danger which was threatening society. That this was so seems likely from the fact that in 1592-93 the severity of the Act of 1572 was somewhat relaxed, and whipping substituted for the heavier penalties. Nevertheless, hardly a year passes without some measure urging the summary punishment of vagabonds until 1597, when all previous Acts against rogues and vagabonds are repealed, a fresh definition of the class is given, and every such vagabond *found begging* is ordered

<sup>1</sup> They may have fallen temporarily out of use, but, as we shall see, they play an important part in future legislation.

to be whipped, and either passed to his last residence or birthplace, or sent to the House of Correction (not therefore legally put down). Here also is introduced the punishment of banishment or the galleys.

The famous Act 43 Eliz. is for the main part constructive, and aims at providing for Classes II., III., IV. rather than at repressing Class I.; nevertheless, it leaves in force the previous penalties, and ensures further discrimination between those to be punished and those to be helped.

The repressive policy is resumed under James I., who issued a proclamation against vagabonds, in which the penalty of banishment is ordained, and the countries specified to which incorrigible or dangerous rogues are to be banished (Newfoundland, East and West Indies, France, Germany, Spain, and the Low Countries). Mr. Ribton-Turner suggests that a large increase of vagabondism called for this recurrence of legislation against it, and quotes *Stanleyes Remedye* (written in this reign, though not published until 1646), in which the number of idle vagrants is estimated at 80,000. Stanley, himself a reformed highwayman, protests against the superfluity of whipping, at any rate until after a labour test has been applied. For those who obdurately refuse work when put before them he suggests an ingenious combination of whipping and banishment—the two penalties then in favour. They should, he says, be sold to the plantations “to see whether God will turn their hearts and amend their lives” (Eden, vol. i. p. 169). In 1603-4 an Act was passed ordaining the branding

of dangerous or incorrigible rogues with a "great Roman R"; the second offence being punishable by death. It should be noted that this, as well as other Acts of a similar nature, is to continue in force only to the end of the next Parliament; it is regarded therefore as an experimental and temporary measure.

Difficulties seem to have arisen in ensuring the execution of the laws, and in 1609-10 a new Act insists upon the building of more Houses of Correction, and ordains that if there is not before Michaelmas 1611 a House of Correction in any county, the justices of that county shall forfeit £5 apiece. Those who are consigned to the Houses of Correction "are not to be chargeable to the countrie for any allowance . . . but shall have such and so much allowance as they shall deserve by their labour and work." Actual attempts at transportation to the plantations were also made about this time in connection with the Merchant Companies; but they do not appear to have effected much. In 1614 the Lord Mayor thought he had found the real cure for the vagabonds in keeping them at work in Bridewell, "not punishing any for begging, but setting them on work, which was worse than death to them."

The constant enlisting and disbanding of troops during this century was a prolific cause of vagabondism, and led to constant legislation on the same lines. In 1628 and 1629 there was also an influx of Irish vagrants, and special measures had to be taken for forbidding their transport into England, and shipping them back to Ireland. In 1630 it was

found necessary to appoint a Royal Commission to make inquiry into the working of all laws and statutes then in force; orders were issued to the justices, and directions given for the carrying out of the statutes. Amongst these is the instruction that the Correction Houses in all counties may be made adjoining to the common prison, and the gaoler be made governor of them, so that he may have facilities for putting prisoners to work.

For twenty-six years after this it seems to have been left in the hands of local authorities to enforce the law, and to judge from the numerous proclamations issued there was considerable difficulty in doing it. No doubt the civil wars and disturbances added greatly to the difficulty of keeping order, while it was not until the comparative tranquility of the Interregnum that the Government found leisure to repeat its legislation against vagabonds. Mr. Ribton-Turner quotes (p. 161) an Act of 1656, defining what persons fall under the penalties laid down in the Act of 1597, and ordering the enforcement of those penalties, with additional stipulation that vagabonds are to be punished even though they shall not be taken begging.

The "Act of Settlement" passed in 1662 seems to have been aimed less at the vagabond than at the labourer who tried to better his position by moving to more prosperous localities; and of its effect upon this class we shall speak later on. No doubt it also served as a weapon in harrying the vagabond from place to place. Special authority is given to the

parish officials to apprehend rogues, vagrants, etc., and set them to work in the corporations or work-houses ; while the justices of the peace may make a selection of such as they think should be transported to the English plantations. A new departure is also made in offering a reward for their capture, "Whereas for want of encouragement to persons apprehending vagrants, the Statutes are not duly executed ; it is enacted that the justice before whom such vagrant shall be brought may order a reward of 2s. to the person bringing him, to be paid by the constable of such parish where the vagrant passed through unapprehended " (Burns, p. 47).

Thirty years later the vagabond had developed the highwayman, and the reward of 2s. was raised by an Act of 1692 to a gratuity of £40 for a highwayman, plus the horse, furniture, arms, and money of the robber. Of the ordinary vagrant the number certainly seems to have diminished during the century, for whereas Stanley estimated them at 80,000, Gregory King in 1688 computes them at 30,000, earning an annual income of £10 : 10s. each.

In 1700 an Act was passed repealing former laws and re-enacting them on much the same lines. The principle of settlement is brought into play, and the vagabonds are to be sent to the place of their last legal settlement, or of their birth. "The manner of conveying such person to be from county to county, and to be whipped in every county through which he is conveyed" (Burns, p. 50). Later on we find the reward for the apprehension of vagabonds increased

to 10s., and a penalty of 10s. to 40s. imposed on persons harbouring them. Finally, in 1743-44, the Act of 17 George II. again repeals and re-enacts the previous laws. It begins with the usual statement with which these Acts are prefaced: "Whereas the number of rogues, vagabonds, beggars, and other idle and disorderly persons daily increases," etc., and goes on to describe the various persons and penalties in detail. It is noteworthy that the provision made for destitute wives and children has by this time created a new class of vagabond; those who run away, leaving their families to the charge of the parish, and special clauses having reference to them are introduced into these Acts (Burns, p. 52).

By this time, however, the idea was gaining ground that the only way of dealing effectually with vagabonds was to set them to work. We have already noted how one Lord Mayor discovered that work was "worse than death to them." Stanley, the highwayman, made a similar discovery, and tells the story of one Mr. Harman, a "goodly and charitable gentleman," who ordered all the sturdy beggars who should come into the neighbourhood to be sent to him, and set them to gather stones in his grounds; "which thing, when all of the wandering Beggars and Rogues understood, they durst not one of them come begging in that parish, for feare they should be made to work." His method was to provide meat and drink and a penny a day, and "lustie stout servants to see to them." It is important to notice these instances, in which the work is obviously a

penalty and a test, and not a making of employment, such as was being developed in the new workhouses (see 18 Eliz.). The Houses of Correction were for vagabonds and such of the able-bodied poor as spoiled or refused the work given out to them (apparently in their own homes) by the parish authorities. The original type of the Workhouse was the House of Correction, where the vagabond shared his penalties and his work with the petty criminal from the gaol next door. It was perhaps unfortunate that these Houses of Correction lost their distinctive character, or were superseded by the Workhouse to which descended their bad reputation without their penal discipline. Of the Workhouse as the outcome of the endeavour to find employment for the honest poor we shall now treat in dealing with Class II.

(B) *The Able-Bodied Honest Poor*.—Legislation on behalf of this class has always been more or less under protest. Ashley (p. 366) even thinks that the numbers in it during the two centuries in question can have been but small, so slight was the attention paid to their wants; and he attributes this to the enormous development of domestic industries which made employment easy to find. But it does not seem clear that he was right on this point. Agrarian changes and social disturbances were constantly throwing numbers of labourers out of their employment, who certainly were not all absorbed again (at any rate during the sixteenth century), and who can hardly have all degenerated into the idle vagabond, against whom the penal laws were directed;

and though the State was at first chary of interfering to "make work," we find between 1558 and 1760 a surprisingly large number of private schemes being aired, for the employment of the poor in lucrative industries.<sup>1</sup> No less than 137 publications concerning the poor are enumerated by Eden as appearing during this time, most of which contain some such scheme. It is curious that Aschrott, on the other hand, regards it as the characteristic feature of the Elizabethan Poor Law, that in it more attention is given to the provision for the able-bodied than to the care of the impotent (*Das Englische Armenwesen*, pp. 12, 13). The truth seems to lie between the two extremes. In addition to the penalties attached to vagrancy and begging, an Act had been passed in 1562 authorising any two justices of the peace (or the mayor and two aldermen) to compel all persons between twelve and sixty who were without means to work either in the fields or at some trade, the same Act empowering the justices to fix the rate of wages (not repealed until 38 and 39 Vict.). It was little more than a logical consequence of this that in subsequent Acts the authorities were empowered to provide the employment itself, by buying "stock" whereon to set the people to work. In connection with this providing of stock, it should be noticed that the difficulties attendant upon capitalist production were already beginning to make themselves felt

<sup>1</sup> Sir Matthew Hale, *Provision for the Poor*, p. 3 (1683), speaks of the poor who are able to work, and for whom work should be provided, as being far greater in number than the impotent.

(Cunningham, vol. i. p. 466). Complaints are made that the wealthy clothiers are engrossing the looms, encouraging unskilled labour, and lowering wages, and statutes are passed to check these evils. Any movement, therefore, of the State towards providing stock and machinery must be regarded as tending either to revert to the smaller domestic industry, or to rival the capitalists on their own ground; and it is fairly to be supposed that the statesmen of the time must have recognised this position.

Legislation on behalf of the able-bodied poor was, then, mainly incidental to the twofold endeavour to check idleness, and to make adequate provision for the impotent. So much is this the case that Burns, in his *History of the Poor Law*, classifies his summary of the Acts under three headings only: (1) those referring to servants (not properly Poor Laws in our modern sense at all, but statutes regulating wages and labour); (2) those relating to vagrants; (3) those relating to the impotent poor. The first hint we can find of provision of work for the able-bodied is in the 27 Henry VIII., where provision is ordered for the "comfort and relief of the said poor, impotent, decrepit, indigent, and needy people, and *for setting and keeping to work the able poor.*" By the 1 Ed. VI., again, the "city, town, parish, or village" is ordered to provide some such work for their able-bodied poor as they may be occupied in, or to appoint them to such as will find them work for meat and drink. (The pauper, therefore, is not to work for a wage, but for a bare living.) This seems

to be the origin of the "roundsman" system, under which the unemployed poor went round from house to house and were to be employed for at least one day by every householder of a certain rental (Ashley, p. 366). It is in the 18 Eliz. that the objects and conditions of legal provision of work are most clearly laid down (Burns, p. 81): "Also to the intent youth may be accustomed and brought up in labour, and then not like to grow to be idle rogues; and to the intent also that such as be already grown up in idleness, and so rogues at this present, may not have any excuse in saying that they cannot get any service or work" (*i.e.* for a test); "and that other poor and needy persons, being willing to labour, may be set on work"—the justices are instructed to provide "a competent stock of wool, hemp, flax, iron, or other stuff, as the country is most meet for." The method in which the stock is to be disposed of is also clearly laid down; it is to be delivered to the poor and needy persons, to be wrought by them within a given time, and to be paid according to the desert of the work. The system is to be self-supporting when once started, for the wrought stock is to be sold at some market or other place, and more stuff bought with the money coming of the sale "*in such wise as the stock shall not be decayed in value.*" No mention is made of a workhouse, but Houses of Correction are to be provided for those who refuse the work, or "taking such work shall spoil or imbesil the same"; also for the punishment of vagabonds.

The 43 Eliz. merely repeats former instructions

with regard to the able-bodied poor, for the clause authorising the provision of necessary places of habitation seems to apply to the impotent poor only.<sup>1</sup> The directions issued by Privy Council in 1630 contain two interesting clauses: (1) "That the Lords of manoures and townes take care that their tenants, and the parishioners of every towne, may be relieved by worke, or otherwise at home, and not suffered to straggle and beg up and downe in their parish" (thus throwing the responsibility on the landowners); and (4) "That the Statute of Labourers, for retaining of servants, and ordering of wages between the servant and the master, be not deluded by private contracts, before they come to the statutes; and the common fashion of assoynging many absent, not to be allowed of course, as is used."

The next legislation directly affecting the interests of this class appears in the famous Settlements Act, 13 and 14 Ch. II. This begins, "Whereas by reason of some defects in the law, poor people are not restrained from going from one parish to another, and therefore do endeavour to settle themselves in those parishes where there is the best stock, the largest commons or wastes to build cottages, and the most woods for them to burn and destroy; and when they have consumed it, then to another parish, and at last become rogues and vagabonds, to *the great discouragement of parishes to provide stocks where it is liable to be devoured by strangers.*" It would

<sup>1</sup> Sir Matthew Hale (1683) says that the law makes no provision for workhouses.

appear from this that it is not the true industrial stock of the community which is to be defended by the Acts of Settlement, but the stock which is artificially provided by law ; and, indeed, it could only be the legal obligation to set to work upon the stock persons incapable of making a profitable use of it, which would make the multiplication of labourers in any parish a hardship. Aschrott regards it as legislation in the interest of rich districts, from which the poor are to be kept at a distance. It seems more natural to regard it as legislation on behalf of the landowners, upon whom fell the chief burden of the rates (Sir Matthew Hale, p. 7 ; see also *ante*, 23), and who would resent the migration of the poor from districts where provision for them was neglected to districts where it was enforced. Pashley (*Poor Law and Pauperism*, p. 223) points out that "the neglect to carry out the provision of the statute of Elizabeth during the interval between 1601 and 1662 would be likely to produce a considerable difference in the burden of pauperism in different parts of the country," and on p. 221 he quotes from Dekker's *Greevous Grones for the Poore* (1622), that there had been no collection for the poor, "no, not these seven yeares, in many parishes of this land, especiallie in countrie townes."

The principle of Settlement is as old as the fourteenth century, when many regulations were made to prevent the labourers wandering in search of work (Ashley, p. 334) ; but throughout the sixteenth and the first half of the seventeenth century it was only

vagabonds or those who actually became a burden who could be legally removed to their last settlement or birthplace. The Act of 1662 authorises such removal in the case of any person "*likely to be chargeable*" to the parish, unless he gave sufficient security. The newcomer was safe if he occupied a tenement of the yearly value of £10 or over, but Pashley points out that a rent of £10 in 1662 is equivalent to one of £50 in the present currency, so that the exception does not really protect the labourer at all. That the Act worked as a real oppression is obvious from the fact that poor people were wont to conceal themselves for the forty days after their arrival, during which they were removable, thus necessitating an Act in 1685 ordaining that the forty days should be counted from the time they gave notice to the overseers of their residence, and another in 1691<sup>1</sup> ordering such notice to be read in church. It is curious that while this Act of 1662 made the enforcement of removals more stringent and burdensome, it also made the settlement easier to obtain. Originally a person had his settlement in the place where he last abode by the space of three years, or in his birthplace; in the reign of James I. the three years were diminished to one, and by the Act of 1662 forty days were sufficient to constitute a settlement.<sup>2</sup>

It is difficult to produce evidence as to how far

<sup>1</sup> See Fowle, p. 64. The same Act dispenses with written notices in the case of those who execute any public annual office, pay rates for a year, or are legally hired or apprenticed; but in 1722 it is ordained that rates paid to the scavenger shall not suffice to constitute a legal settlement.

<sup>2</sup> Burns, p. 108.

these restrictions on the free movements of the labourer were an industrial evil. Eden thinks that the hardships imposed by them upon the poor have been exaggerated (vol. i. p. 298), and that a respectable man could find his security. That they would cause great inequalities in the rates of wages seems *a priori* certain; and we find Defoe pointing out in 1704 that whereas in Kent a poor man will earn 7s., 10s., or 9s. a week, in the north he will earn 4s. or perhaps less. Richard Dunning, also, in 1685 calculates that a Devonshire day labourer could earn 5d. a day all the year round, and his diet, which he estimates at 5d. a day more. But these differences are hardly more striking than could be cited for different parts of the country at the present day, even if we confine ourselves to agricultural labourers. Pashley, however, quotes (p. 238) the preamble to an Act in 1696 as proving incontrovertibly how injurious the statute of Charles II. had proved in its influence on the distribution of labour. "Forasmuch as many poor persons, chargeable to the parish, township, or place where they live, merely for want of work, would in any other place, where sufficient employment is to be had, maintain themselves without being burthensome . . . they are for the most part confined to live in their own parishes, townships, or places, and not permitted to inhabit elsewhere, though their labour is wanted in many other places, where the increase of manufacture would employ more hands." The Act then provides that the penalties of removal may be avoided by the production of a certificate from the

churchwarden, overseers, and two justices of the last settlement, which would make the possessor irremovable until he became actually chargeable.

The first suggestion of workhouses as places in which the respectable poor should be set to work seems to have come from Stanley, the reformed highwayman (1646). He protests against the injustice of punishing people for being idle without first offering them work, and urges that houses and convenient places should be provided to set the poor to work. . . . "Surely many of them would go to work if such houses were provided for them." This ignoring of the legal provision for employing the poor seems to point to the fact that the authorities had allowed this part of their work to fall into abeyance, possibly because they found it impossible to keep their stock intact when competing with capitalist production on an increasingly larger scale.

Whether Stanley intended his workhouses as places of residence is not clear. Sir Matthew Hale renews the idea in his *Discourse touching Provision for the Poor*, 1683, and certainly means them only as places to which the poor shall resort to work, just as they do to the mill or factory of to-day. Probably the change from giving out work to the poor in their own homes to gathering them together in a workhouse, was merely intended to enable the work provided by law to keep pace with that of private enterprise, which was already beginning to develop the factory system. A master is to be appointed, who is to supervise the work, and can be authorised

by a justice of the peace to chastise defaulters by imprisonment or moderate correction within the Workhouse. Hale goes minutely into the financial prospects of such an institution, and is very optimistic in his calculations. Not only is the stock to maintain itself, but the wages to be paid will set the rate for covetous masters in hard times who strive to take advantage of the poor. The Workhouse is to be a refuge where they can be employed at reasonable wages. At the worst, he argues, even if there is loss in the system, it will be as cheap as maintaining the poor under the present system, while the education in habits of work will more than countervail the loss of a very considerable stock, especially as the Workhouse will serve also as a school for the children, and a test for wanderers and beggars.

An elaborate scheme was also drawn up by Sir Josiah Child for London, Westminster, and Southwark, which includes the provision of workhouses, and a similar suggestion was made in a pamphlet published in 1687, four years later, by Thomas Firmin, "Some Proposals for the Employing of the Poor, especially in and about the City of London, and for the Prevention of Begging." Burns also quotes seven other schemes for employing the poor.

No legislation, however, followed these suggestions until after the new commissioners, in 1696, were ordered "to consider of proper methods for setting on work and employing the poor, and making them useful to the public" (Mr. E. C. Price, *The Poor Law and the Unemployed*). The next

year a special Act of Parliament was passed for establishing a workhouse in the city of Bristol, much upon the lines proposed by Sir Josiah Child. This experiment seems to have been the special venture of a certain Mr. Cary, and he writes of it about 1700 (Burns, p. 181) that it had "very good success, insomuch that there was not a common beggar, or disorderly vagrant, to be seen in the streets." Adverse critics, however, were not wanting, and Eden (p. 281) quotes one: "From their first erection in the year 1696 to the year 1714, they continued to put the poor to work—I mean, those they had in their workhouse called the Mint. And they tried them upon a great many different sorts of work, to make them useful toward their support, but not only without any benefit from their labour but to the great loss of the Corporation. For as soon as they came to do anything tolerably well, that they might have been assisting to the younger and less practised, they went off to sea, or were apprenticed in the city; by which means the public were so far benefited, though the Corporation bore the loss of the charge of teaching them, and of all the tools with which they were to work, and of the materials for it. For they made nothing perfect or merchantable from their work, but only spoiled the materials. So that instead of lessening the charge of maintaining the poor, they increased it. . . ." They then gave up the work and merely contracted the labour out to a gentleman, "for whom they made sacks for a small gratuity, being

maintained by the public." Eden says: "It appears from this account that the way by which the magistrates of Bristol reduced the charges of maintaining the poor, was by driving away paupers who were not settled in that city." Writing in 1700, Cary recommends the establishment of similar houses over the country as a test, and not as commercial enterprises. "Nor should these houses hinder any who desire to work at home, or the manufacturers from employing them; the design being to provide places for those who care not to work anywhere, and to make the parish officers more industrious to find them out, when they know whither to send them; by which means they would be better able to maintain the impotent." They were, therefore, to take the place of the old Houses of Correction. But though three years' experience had taught Cary the right function of a workhouse, the idea of a labour test was certainly not the one uppermost in a Bill introduced into Parliament in 1704 (Pashley, p. 243). "The object of this proposed legislation was a complete organisation of labour, by establishing great parochial manufactories and raising capital by poor rates, in order to carry on in each such manufactory a trade in which paupers might be employed as labourers. The wild scheme met with the complete approbation of the House of Commons, and was passed there with great applause, but was rejected by the other House." It was the occasion for Defoe's celebrated pamphlet, "Giving Alms no Charity," in which he points out very forcibly the

disastrous consequences likely to result from the diverting of industry from its natural channels in favour of the least efficient members of the community. Nevertheless, an Act was passed in 1720, prohibiting the use of printed calicoes, in order to effectually employ the poor in the silk and woollen manufactures.

Special Acts authorised the establishment of workhouses in six towns (Bristol, Worcester, Plymouth, Exeter, Hull, and Norwich),<sup>1</sup> and the General Act of 1722 authorises their erection in all parishes, and provides that relief may be refused to all who decline to be lodged in such houses. The "offer of the house" is therefore definitely made a test of destitution. Eden gives an interesting account of the effects of this policy (vol. i. pp. 260 *sqq.*), quoting the expenditure of several parishes. That of St. Andrew's, Holborn, is typical. The Workhouse there was opened in June 1727. Before that period the poor rate was £1000 per annum; before 1730 it was reduced to £750; while in 1776 it had risen to £1329. The reason for this rise may be found in another change of policy; towards the end of the century the idea of admission to the Workhouse being used as a test seems to have been almost entirely lost sight of, to judge from the Regulations for the Relief of the Poor of St. Giles, Bloomsbury, issued in 1781. In these "it is earnestly recommended to the officers to consider the Workhouse

<sup>1</sup> There seems also to have been a "house of maintenance" for St. Giles and St. George.

only as an asylum for the aged, for orphans in an infant state, for idiots, lunatics, and the lame, blind, sick, or otherwise infirm and diseased persons; and that no persons who are able to earn a livelihood . . . should be admitted into or be permitted to remain therein." It is reasonable to suppose that before the change in policy could be so definitely formulated it had already been for some time practised.

In the latter half of the eighteenth century, therefore, the Workhouse approaches more nearly to being a hospital for the impotent and a refuge for the infirm and children, than to either the Houses of Correction or the industrial schools from which they developed.

(C) *Poor Law Provision for Children*.—The importance of industrial education has never been wholly lost sight of, however inadequate such education may at times have been. Of education in any wider sense of the word we find little trace. Pashley (p. 244) thinks that some idea of educating the poor was current in the early part of the eighteenth century, and quotes Mandeville as arguing in 1714 against such education, on the ground that "Going to school in comparison to working is idleness; and the longer boys continue in this easy sort of life the more unfit they will be, when grown up, for downright labour, both as to strength and inclination." It is interesting to find an Act for the protection of children so early as the 3 and 4 Ed. VI. (1551), in which it is enacted "that if any men and women going a-begging do carry children about with

them, any person may take such child, above the age of five years and under fourteen, to be brought up in any honest labour and occupation; if a woman-child, until the age of fifteen years, 'or be married'; if a man-child, to the age of eighteen." The same order is made in 14 Eliz., only that the age to which the child may be kept is raised—for a girl to eighteen, for a boy to twenty-four.

With respect to illegitimate children it is established in Elizabeth's earlier legislation that they shall be kept by the parish, but that the justices shall have power to make a weekly or other charge upon the child's parents.

By the 39 Eliz. the overseers are ordered to set to work "the children of all such whose parents shall not be thought able to keep and maintain their children." Or "to bind such children to be apprentices, where they shall see convenient, till such man-child shall come to the age of twenty-four years, and such woman-child till the age of twenty-one." By the end of the century difficulties seem to have arisen in finding persons willing to receive the children as apprentices, for it is ordered that unless the persons to whom they are appointed shall receive and provide for them they shall forfeit £10.

The 43 Eliz. emphasises the principle of parental and filial responsibility: "Where, in the former Act, it is said that parents or children, being of ability, shall maintain such poor persons respectively, it is here expressed that the father and grandfather, and the mother and grandmother, and the children, of

every such poor person shall maintain them" (Burns, p. 93).

When children were first consigned to the Work-house instead of being boarded out does not appear clear. That grave evils attended both systems is obvious from an Act passed in 1762, ordering the registration and periodical revision of "all poor infants under four years of age," as means of preserving the lives of such infants. What was the extent of the evil hinted at in this Act we may learn from a pamphlet published by the governors of the parish of St. James, Westminster, 1797. It is called, "Sketch of the State of the Children of the Poor in the year 1756, and of the Present State and Management of all the Poor in the Parish of St. James, Westminster, in January 1797." The "Sketch" is so brief that it may be quoted in full:—

"In the year 1756 the Honourable House of Commons required an account from every Parish within the Bills of Mortality of the Number of Children they had respectively brought up, and placed out as Apprentices, by which it appeared that only *Seven* Children had been brought up and placed out by all the Parishes, 147 in Number. In an Account delivered at the same Time by the Governors of the Foundling Hospital, they boasted to have lost only 75 per Cent per Annum of the Children entrusted to their care."

The pamphlet goes on to describe how, under

the Act of 1762, the governors withdrew the children "mouldering away in the Workhouse," and after much search and great difficulty found several cottagers on Wimbledon Common who were fit to be trusted with the children, and who were bribed to keep them alive by premiums on every illness which they survived.

(D) *The Provision for the Aged and Impotent Poor* has always been the first care of the community since Poor Law legislation began. Adopted at first as a religious virtue it was afterwards accepted as a civic duty, and from the latter point of view, considerations of policy and of unselfish charity came to light which had been gradually lost sight of as almsgiving had come to be more and more practised for the sake of the donor's salvation. It was the State which reintroduced the principle of discrimination which had been entirely lost sight of by the Church. The loving care of the poor, voluntarily exercised by religious organisations, which Ratzinger<sup>1</sup> regards as the true type of religious almsgiving, had long been superseded by the inadequate and indiscriminate scattering of doles, when in 1536 the State first ordained that the poor of every place should be succoured, found and kept, by way of voluntary charity, "in such wise as none of them of very necessity shall be compelled to go openly in begging," on pain that every parish making default forfeit 20s. a month (27 H. VIII.). (Before that the only legal provision made was the granting of

<sup>1</sup> *Geschichte der Kirchlichen Armenpflege.*

begging licences.) Several subsequent Acts repeat these instructions, with directions as to the best methods of carrying them out, and in 1572 (14 Eliz.) still fuller provision is ensured by instructions to all the justices of the peace to search out "all aged, poor, impotent, and decayed persons to register their names in a book, and to assign to them convenient places of habitation." It is in this Act that we first find a clause inserted, forbidding "any diseased or impotent poor person, living on alms, to repair to the city of Bath, or town of Buckstone, to the baths there, for ease of their grief, unless they be licensed so to do by two justices, and be provided for by the inhabitants from whence they came of such relief towards their maintenance, as shall be necessary for the time of their abode and return home again." This clause constantly appears in subsequent Acts, and poor persons going to Bath Hospital still have to get their papers signed by two Guardians and deposit £3 caution money.

By the 35 Eliz. a special rate is ordered for the maintenance of such as have adventured their lives and lost their limbs in the defence and service of her Majesty and the State; and by the 39 Eliz. an important step is taken in authorising a rate for the erection of convenient houses of dwelling for the impotent poor, in each of which are to be placed "inmates, or more families than one." In 1601 it is expressly stipulated that these cottages shall not be used for any other habitation, but only for the impotent and poor.

How far these provisions for the impotent poor—adequate enough in themselves—were actually carried out it is difficult to say; there is no further legislation of any importance on their behalf until 1691. By that time the idea of keeping a register of those to be “put upon the collection” seems to have been forgotten, and it is renewed by the 3 Will. III. in consequence of the misspending of public money by the officials. A few years later further precautions were found necessary, and it was ordered that every person put upon the collection should wear the badge of a large Roman P in red or blue cloth.

The legislation for the next fifty years is mainly connected with difficulties of administration calling for increased control over Poor Law officials. But by 1729 overseers may purchase or hire houses for the lodging, keeping, and employing of the poor; two or more parishes may join in hiring such a house (here is the beginning of the Union); and the overseers, where such house shall be hired or purchased, may, by agreement, take in the poor of any other parish or place. This seems to have been the point from which the Workhouse came to be amalgamated with the house for the impotent poor, in such wise that our modern Workhouse really represents three distinct institutions—the House of Correction, the parish workshop, and the almshouse. In the Report of St. Giles already quoted (p. 137), we see how, in 1781, the almshouse view was indeed the predominant one.

(E) *The Administration of the Poor Law.*—From the very commencement of legal provision for the poor, it has been found constantly necessary to reinforce, and generally to reconstruct to some extent, the machinery by which it is to be administered. The duty is at first divided between the civil and ecclesiastical authorities. The penal part of the administration is left to the justices of the peace, and in Henry VIII.'s reign it is the justices who have power to grant begging licences. By the 27 H. VIII. (see p. 127) all the head officers of every city, shire, town, and parish are to most charitably receive their poor, all governors and ministers are to relieve them, and the whole parish is made responsible under penalty of a forfeit. All preachers also are to exhort people to be liberal in giving to the common box (private almsgiving of the nature of "common or open doles" is prohibited except to travellers, who may give by the roadside to the lame, blind, sick, aged, or impotent people), and the churchwardens are to keep watch over the collector that he does not "imbezil" the money. Books are to be kept of the money collected, and how it is spent; and two or three times a week certain of the paupers, appointed by the mayor, governor, or constable, are to collect broken meat and refuse for distribution. In so far as this work should interfere with the ordinary business of collectors, churchwardens, etc., they are to receive from the money collected such competent wages as the civil authorities may appoint; and they shall not remain in office more than one year. The overplus of rich

parishes is to be distributed among poor parishes in the same district. That the office of collector was not an enviable one, we may learn from the fact that it was soon found necessary to impose a fine upon those who refused to serve, rising from 10s. to £10.

This heavy fine was imposed by the 5 Eliz. in 1563, when it had become evident that voluntary charity did not respond adequately to the requirements made of it by the State. By this Act is ordained that on the Sunday before midsummer day notice shall be given to parishioners to prepare themselves on the Sunday next following to come to the church, and there to choose collectors for the poor. Besides imposing a fine as penalty for refusal to serve, provision is made for compelling a collector to render his accounts to the dignitaries of the church in company with a justice of the peace. Those who decline to give are also dealt with, and if any one "of his froward willful mind shall obstinately refuse to give weekly according to his ability," he is to be exhorted by the various dignitaries of the church in ascending scale, and finally, if these prove unavailing, the obstinate person is to be assessed by the justice of the peace and the churchwardens according to their good discretions. As the penalty for continued refusal is committal to gaol, it is clear that we have here a compulsory, and not a voluntary, maintenance of the poor. The first registration of the poor took place, as we have already seen, in 1572, and was to be carried out by the civil officers. The object was to

ascertain the number of poor within each "division," and, that being done, to set down (having regard to the number) the weekly amount required for their relief within each division. They are then to assess every inhabitant within the division with the amount he is to contribute weekly, and register each with the amount he is to pay. They are also to appoint collectors and overseers, the latter to forfeit 10s. if they refuse to serve. Collectors are to account half-yearly to the justices. The whole system is thus become compulsory, and is transferred to the hands of the civil authorities. Provision is made, however, for appeal to the justices of the bench at the next general session, should any one "find himself grieved" by virtue of this Act (Burns, pp. 77 *sqq.*).

This method of adapting the rate to the needs of the parish appears to have been neglected later on in favour of a fixed, and often insufficient rate, for among the Orders and Directions issued in 1630 by Privy Council we find one as follows:—

"That the weekely taxations for the reliefe of the Poore, and other purposes mentioned in the 43rd Eliz., bee, in these times of scarcitie, raised to higher rates in every parish, than in times tofore were used; and contributions had from other parishes to help the weaker parishes, especially from those places where depopulations have been, some good contribution to come, for helpe of other parishes. And where any money, or stocke, hath beene, or shall be given to the relief of the Poore in any parish, such gift to be no occasion of lessening the rates of the parish."

With the introduction of employment for the poor came the necessity for appointing "governors" to supervise the work, and look after the stock (these again to be appointed by the justices), and "wardens" to rule over the Houses of Correction. In the same Act (18 Eliz.) an attempt is made to encourage private charity by providing that any one who, within the next twenty years, should give any lands, tenements, or hereditaments towards setting the people to work, should do so without licence of mortmain.

By the 39 Eliz. it is further enacted that the churchwardens of every parish and four substantial householders shall be nominated overseers of the poor by the justices. They are to meet at least once a month in the church after divine service, "there to consider of some good course to be taken." If any parish is unable to support its own poor, the justices may tax any other parishes to contribute. The compelling power still rests with the justices, who may commit to gaol any one refusing to contribute, or any overseers who refuse to "account," or any poor who refuse to work.

In this way was constituted the full machinery for carrying out the Elizabethan Poor Law. How far it proved sufficient for its purpose is doubtful. Pashley writes (p. 220): "It appears probable that the proper carrying out of the provisions of this statute (43 Eliz.) was greatly neglected, and that, for twenty, thirty, or forty years after its passing there were many parishes in which no such poor rates as it required to be laid were ever made at all; it is even

said that many poor people perished for want. . . . And it seems clear that before the restoration of Charles II. the unpaid annual officers, under whose care the poor were placed by the statute of Elizabeth, had not only failed to raise proper funds for relieving the impotent, but still more had neglected to carry out the parochial organisation of labour which the statute contemplated. Able-bodied applicants for relief obtained some allowance in money without being put to work at all."

We find corroboratory evidence of the failure of officials (both high and low) to fulfil their functions properly in the "Orders" issued by Privy Council in 1630. The first of these provides for a monthly meeting of justices of the peace, before whom shall assemble the high constables, petty constables, churchwardens, and overseers, and inquiry be made as to how each of these officers have done their duties. If any infringement of the law is discovered, a fine is to be imposed, of which part is to go to the informant. To ensure that justices of the peace are themselves diligent and careful the justices of assize in every circuit are to make careful inquiries about them. It was the justices of assize who were responsible for the whole system, who held it together, and who, when it broke down—as it did during the Civil War—were charged with the duty of reconstructing it.

Inderwick, writing about the justice of assize (*The Interregnum*, p. 173), says: "He was, as it were, a grand guardian to the poor, and as such heard petitions from poor people who complained of the

non-administration of parish relief, and at every assize town he heard and decided disputed settlements of paupers." The judges, after the Civil War, "found the country without coroners, justices, constables, overseers, or churchwardens. . . . The poor rates had not been collected for years. . . . Men had refused to be constables or churchwardens, so that the few existing constables were old and useless. . . . Of the justices of the peace, not more than 10 per cent had been sworn into office, so that those who acted were few in number and mostly old." The justices of assize, therefore, had to completely reconstruct the machinery of the Poor Law, and they appear to have done it with energy and wisdom.

Sir Josiah Child, in his *Discourse upon Trade*, written in the reign of Charles II. (see Burns, pp. 160 sqq.), argues that the failure of the Poor Laws is due to their own defects, and not to bad administration. "But if it be retorted upon me that, by my own confession, much of this mischief happens by the ill execution of the laws, I say, better execution of them than you have seen you must not expect, and there never was a good law made that was not well executed, the fault of the law causing a failure of execution." We may admit some force in this argument, provided that we can ensure honesty of purpose in all administrators, but how far this is from being the case may be illustrated from the 3 W., 1691. This Act declares that "many inconveniences do daily arise in cities, towns corporate, and parishes, where the inhabitants are very numerous, by reason

of the unlimited power of the churchwardens and overseers, who do frequently, upon frivolous pretences (but chiefly for their own private ends), give relief to what persons and number they think fit"; and then goes on to ordain a register to be kept and renewed annually of all persons receiving relief; none but those put on the register to receive relief except by order of the justices. (A further check was introduced afterwards in the wearing of a pauper badge by all recipients.) It is curious to note here how Poor Law history is forgotten and repeats itself over and over again. Early in Elizabeth's reign the necessity for a register had already been felt, and provision made for keeping of one in every parish. A hundred years later this is apparently quite forgotten, though many of the old registers must still have been in existence.

The prohibition of relief to non-registered persons except by authority of the justices was quickly construed by the justices into permission to give relief to non-registered persons without knowledge of the parish officers; and in 1729 an Act was passed to oblige them to communicate with the officials before ordering relief—a measure which does not seem to have had much effect in checking them in the abuse of their power. The worst evils arising from this occurred, however, after 1760; and this is also the case with another clause of the same Act (9 G.), which allowed overseers to "contract with any person for the lodging, keeping, and employing their poor." The changes in the Poor Law which led ultimately to the degradation of the labouring classes, revealed

in the Report of the Poor Law Commission of 1834, were already initiated in 1760. In 1796 the fatal step was taken of abolishing the Workhouse test, and of making poverty instead of destitution the qualification for relief. From this time forward the able-bodied pauper became the chief object of Poor Law relief, often to the cruel neglect of the impotent, aged, and children. Poor Law officials had no time nor thought for the proper supervision of workhouses, when they were being constantly besieged by troops of threatening men, urging their claims to have their wages supplemented by the parish allowance, and nearly always able to get a magistrate's order to support them. The office of overseer became so onerous, and even dangerous, that it became the practice to elect a man for a few months only ; and in this way even the advantage of experience was lost. Poor Law expenditure quickly doubled and trebled itself, and the country had nothing to show for it but the creation of a demoralised people, who found it paid better to be idle, thriftless paupers than sober, independent workmen. For the former were sure of constant employment when they chose to work, of a "minimum" wage, and of a fixed allowance for every child ; while the latter were turned adrift from their employment to make room for the pauper, whose wages would be partly paid from the rates, and had no remedy until all the savings of their industry were exhausted, and they in turn declared themselves paupers.

END

## V

### KLASSENKAMPF

IN reading of social problems as they develop on the Continent, no one can fail to be struck with the way in which they are embittered by the spirit of class-warfare. So keenly is it felt, and so deeply does it appeal to the people, that by a certain party—the German Social Democrats—it has been accepted as the principle of progress itself; and the summons to hatred has become not only the basis of an economic system, but also the war-cry of a crusade.

All crusaders have their war-cry, upon which depends very largely their success. What are the characteristics of a successful war-cry? In the first place it must represent a definite, simple idea, which can be understood quickly and without great effort by many people of very various degrees of intelligence; and in the second place it must appeal directly, and without the necessity of any reasoned demonstration, to the emotions of the multitude.

To their understanding of these conditions the Socialist leaders in Germany have owed much of their influence. “Class-warfare” is the cry by which from the first they have summoned the people to rally

round their standard, and it is their uncompromising loyalty to this cry which has kept the German Social Democrats a compact fighting body when the ranks of English Socialists are breaking up in confusion and compromise.

The principle contained in the cry is very simple. All past history, it maintains, is the history of struggles for pre-eminence among different classes, and these struggles have now concentrated and culminated in one fierce uncompromising wrestle between the bourgeoisie or capitalist on the one hand, and the proletariat on the other. And just as the bourgeoisie has fought itself into pre-eminence in the past, so the proletariat will, inevitably and by the immutable laws of economic development, fight itself into pre-eminence in the future. This is the modern version of the heaven which rewards the prowess of all good crusaders.

Here are all the elements of success. The sharp contrast emphasised between bourgeois and proletariat simplifies the real complexity of social relations, and appeals straight to the imagination as a contrast between rich and poor. The surging of self-pity hides the ignominy implied in accepting the shameful title of "proletariat," and hatred—almost the strongest emotion of which we are capable—responds eagerly to the summons to war. And it is a summons which deafens the crusader to all particular circumstances of time and place, and to the teachings of his own experience. It may be that his own employers, or even all the employers known to him, are men whom

he admires and respects, and would greatly desire to be. No matter ; they belong to the hated class, and he to the chosen people with the future in its hands, and they must perish for the sake of the cause. Saladin and Cœur de Lion may have a profound admiration for each other privately ; but it is Moslem against Christian, and there can be no parley with the unclean thing.

Such is the spirit which animates social movements on the Continent, and excites terrified oppression in the courts of kings. How far can we trace the same feeling in England—a country where, if it really exists, it can find much better expression than abroad ? It is not unknown, of course, and from time to time attempts have been made to utilise it to the same purpose as in Germany. Now and then some young enthusiast sounds the trumpet-call, here and there some wily veteran tries back cautiously to the “first principle” enunciated by Marx and Engels ; but the cry has found but a faint echo, and the policy of direct warfare has been almost entirely abandoned for one of compromise and “permeation.”

The reason is not far to seek. The self-constituted leaders of democracy in England are themselves too closely allied with the hated class to hate consistently. Their sympathies are all with the working-class ? Yes, that part of their sympathies which finds conscious expression in words, and as they themselves understand them ; but their lives ? Our conscious creeds may form but an insignificant part of our nature at any moment, and do but float on the

surface of the great subterranean instincts which sway the life at any important turn ; and so the leaders of the chosen people take to themselves wives from amongst the enemy without any consciousness of inconsistency, and cherish a banking account which—be it small or great—goes to swell the iniquity of amassed capital. And who will doubt that they select their investments wisely, with a view to safety and a good return ? Briefly, in all the practical relations of life common-sense prevails, and they act according to their kind.

This attitude is the more natural because of the improbability that in England the young social reformer will be in any way cut off from his natural surroundings by the *rôle* which he assumes. There is a great fund of good-natured tolerance in English society, which regards an outbreak of enthusiasm as not unbecoming in a young man ; while good sense advises that the surest way to drive him to extremes is to cut him off from other interests. And so it happens that while the Socialist leader on the Continent may be an embittered outcast, banished from congenial surroundings, excited by political oppression, and dogged by the police, in England he will be regarded with the indulgent admiration which a mother has for a troublesome, high-spirited boy, and his opinion will be courted by politicians because he “has influence with the people.”

How, then, can the cry of class-warfare be anything but half-hearted in England ? Not only are the spokesmen of the people inextricably entangled in the

meshes of capitalism ; the rank and file of the very people itself recognises its kinship with the class it is called upon to hate, and can make but a superficial response to the war-cry. Its sturdy common-sense and self-respect tells it that it is *not* proletariat, that it *has* some function in the community beyond that of increasing its own numbers, and that therefore there is no natural ground of hatred between it and other classes of the community. No doubt there *is* a proletarian class in England which is at war alike with itself and all others, and is ready enough to respond to the cry ; but it is a small class, and essentially not that of the wage-earners.

Let us consider this question of the different "classes" in English society. It is not quite an easy matter, for whatever division we take, we get perplexing cross-divisions. We cannot, *e.g.* take simple division into wage-earners and capitalists without raising the difficulty of what we are to do with the professional class. If they are to be classed with wage-earners, the division will cease to be useful for purposes of contrast, and there will be few things left to say of either class as such ; for instance, it will then be as obvious as it is true that wage-earning and proletariat are not synonymous. If, on the other hand, we are to say that professional men belong to the capitalist class because their income is really the return to capital invested in their education, then we at once obliterate the distinction between capitalist and wage-earner altogether. Right through the ranks of wage-earners, from the most highly skilled artificer,

who earns more than many a professional man, down to the roughest labourer who knows how to handle a spade, income may, if we like, be just as reasonably regarded as return to capital invested in education, and whether the amount of capital was large or small does not affect the nature of the case. Recent inquiries into the diet of different nations go to show a very close relation between the amount and kind of food absorbed (= capital invested), and the wages earned (= return to capital); and any sensible omnibus company will tell us that it is a good investment to feed the horses well. If then we want to maintain the line of distinction between classes, we must be careful not to obscure it altogether by admitting similarities between earnings and returns to capital.

Shall we say, then, that it is the uncertainty of the wage-earner's position which places him in a class by himself? He has no firm footing in the world; neither land of his own whence he may by the sweat of his brow wrest a certain living, nor any assured position carrying with it a regular income not terminable any day or week? This uncertainty is a common plea for the pathos of the wage-earner's position, and one which must always meet with a sincere response, for is it not in uncertainty that the whole pathos of humanity lies? But it does not follow that because the fact is indisputable, therefore the causes assigned for it are the correct ones. That the wage-earner is *not* dependent upon his own plot of land for a living means perhaps the greatest advance in security of position which can be taken on the

upward scale; for it means that he is freed from the awful tyranny of Nature, from the fear of famine, drought, and all the divers destructions to which the poor man's crops and herds are exposed. Let the peasant of Russia or India tell his tale.

And if we still insist that the position of the man who earns a weekly wage is at least comparatively uncertain, we must pause a little before basing any class distinction upon the fact. Can we on these grounds maintain any essential difference between the artisan and the doctor or lawyer who has not even a daily wage, but depends upon the precariousness of piece-work?

And even if we abandon our professional men as an insuperable obstacle to our attempt to cut up society into neat compartments, it is still far from evident that insecurity of position is confined to the wage-earner. Landed property was at one time regarded as a rock that could not be shaken; now it is more like a quicksand, capable of engulfing large fortunes. And if we could penetrate into the private histories of families which rely upon revenues independent of their abilities, we should learn much from the hopelessness of their position when those revenues fail. Discussions on "Poor Ladies," if they have served no other purpose, must at least have opened the eyes of some to the most pressing claim of women—the claim to be so educated as to have the power of earning if need should arise. This is the only weapon which can be given them against the sordid poverty which awaits them should their resources fail; and it

is beginning to be generally recognised that there is no surer safeguard against distress of every kind than the power of earning. Banks may fail, investments go astray, landed property become worthless; but though the power to earn is itself subject to grave shocks, it is more inalienable than any other kind of possession :

“When land is gone and money spent,  
Then learning is most excellent.”

Of course there *are* men whose possessions are so vast as to place them beyond the possibility of poverty while social order is maintained; but then there are also men whose skill is so great that they need never be without work, even should the social order be broken down.

As a final possibility, we may, if we like, take as the basis of our class distinction the bare fact that incomes vary in amount; that some are rich and others poor. But we shall find the distinction useless and running hopelessly athwart all others. Suppose we say that all with an income of less than £300 a year belong to the proletariat, and all with an income above to the capitalist class. Then we shall often find the women of a family belonging to one class, the men to another; brothers of the same birth and breeding will rank in opposite camps; and men of letters, clergymen, and teachers will be branded as proletariat and called upon to hate their printers, churchwardens, and grocers. Though, indeed, if we accept this basis of classification, the cry to warfare should fail altogether; for all desire a larger income,

and will hardly bestow more than a perfunctory hatred upon the class to which they aspire.

Though the insecurity of the wage-earner's position will hardly serve as a basis for class distinction, its remedy does seem to throw an interesting light on the future of English society. For the average man the only safeguard against the freaks of fortune is an alternative. That the property-owner should possess the power of earning, and that the wage-earner should possess property, this would be the ideal condition, and this it is to which we seem to tend. Collectively, through their clubs, trade unions, building societies, etc., as well as individually through the ordinary machinery for saving, the wage-earning class is amassing a large amount of property to which individuals may anchor themselves in safety during the storms of industrial crises; and if the property-owning classes are not yet universally capable of earning a living, they are probably far less helpless than they were a few generations back.

Now as this *rapprochement* takes place, as each camp adopts more of the qualities of the other, it is clear that such class distinctions as are still left to us must become more and more obliterated. We cannot hate men for possessing property, if we ourselves possess some and hope to possess more; we shall no longer despise men for earning their bread by daily toil, when we pride ourselves on the capacity to earn our own living if need be.

As might be expected, the class feeling remains strongest where this *rapprochement* has not yet

begun to make its influence felt. The man who has never soiled his hands by taking pay, and would be in sorer straits if thrown upon his own resources for a year than was Robinson Crusoe in his island, cannot—however kindly he may try to conceal it—divest himself of a certain degree of contempt for those who labour, whether with hand or brain, for a livelihood. Strange as it may seem, it is the toilers who awaken this feeling of superiority in him, far more than the residual mass at the extreme end of the social scale. It was “Rome’s mechanics” upon whom Coriolanus poured his scorn. And in the same way it is this residual mass, this fringe of the industrial world, which really responds in England to the cry of class-warfare when it can be roused from its apathy, and even it hates—not so much the “real gentleman” as the upper ranks of workers. It is as if some secret fellow-feeling made itself felt between the two extremes, and caused them to draw together in the kind of unreal relation of which the Jubilee dinner is a type. And perhaps the feeling is not without justification. England of to-day is essentially an industrial community—a community of busy independence with which our two extremes have little in common. Both are “outcast,” they are relics of the old feudal system of patronage and dependence; and just as the one extreme cannot get along without some one to depend upon, so the other cannot be happy without some one to whom it can be a special Providence. If we can be special Providence towards an inferior class, we cease to despise it; we do not

respect it, of course, but we regard it with indulgent tolerance, and are well satisfied that it should be there for us to exercise our benevolent instincts upon. It is the class which is poorer than we are, but yet has no need of us, to which therefore we cannot approve our indispensability, which tends to irritate us. I will repeat, therefore, that it is in the two extremes of English society, if anywhere, that we shall find the class feeling still existing in any strength, and this not because of the contrast of wealth and poverty, to lay stress upon which only obscures the real facts. It exists in them primarily because they alone no longer belong to the real throbbing life of the nation. They are something apart; and though we may describe the one as out-cast and the other as select, it really comes to the same thing.

Perhaps some one will go even further than I have ventured to do, and say that the class feeling is no longer to be found at all; that, for instance, the "man of leisure" has no longer any contempt for the worker, but honours him for his toil. In exceptional cases this no doubt is so; but I do not think it can be maintained as the rule, if we examine our experience carefully. Theoretically, of course, it is fashionable to laud the dignity of labour, and to grace one's drawing-room occasionally with a working-man. But even those who are keen to promote the interests of the workers *de haut en bas*, will resent the presence on equal terms, in board-room or committee, of the man who works for a wage or salary.

And when we study the phenomenon, and try to trace its psychological origin, it appears to be due to an incapacity to believe that the man who earns his living can be actuated by any but sordid motives. In other words, the man who cannot earn his living believes most profoundly in the moral inferiority of the man who does.

In England, happily, this feeling is only a relic, and perhaps we shall do well not to obliterate it altogether, but to preserve a few specimens, as we do of other relics—*e.g.* the armour in the Tower, or the few fields which still show traces of a now vanished form of land culture. Nothing is so difficult for the children of the present as to realise the spirit in which their ancestors lived, and no small part of this spirit is contained in the attitude of the different classes of a community towards each other. The indignant old protest—

“When Adam delved and Eve span,  
Who was then the gentleman?”

has lost the greater part of its bitterness for our modern ears, and already the arrogance of the last century has for us a comical element which it certainly had not then. The sagacious Boswell was a good deal troubled in mind by this question. “No doubt,” he says, “honest industry is entitled to esteem. But perhaps the too rapid advances of men of low extraction tends to lessen the value of that distinction by birth and gentility which has ever been found beneficial to the grand scheme of sub-

ordination." He then considers the arguments of those "who think that a new system of gentility might be established upon principles totally different from what have hitherto prevailed," but only to brush them aside. "Such are the specious, but false, arguments for a proposition which will always find numerous advocates in a nation where men are every day starting up from obscurity to wealth. To refute them is needless. The general sense of mankind cries out with irresistible force, 'un gentilhomme est toujours gentilhomme.'"

But, alas for the "grand scheme of subordination," when based upon a birth and property qualification. Read what the *Daily Chronicle* has to tell us of the effect which sixty years of prosperity has had upon our upper classes :

"In the early days of Her Majesty's reign almost all occupations, save the Army, Navy, Church, and Bar, were regarded as below the dignity of a well-born gentleman. Bulwer Lytton was perhaps the first aristocrat to break the barrier as regarded writing for periodicals, and he took the editorship of a magazine with the avowed object of showing that such an occupation was not inconsistent with the position of a gentleman. To-day we have a duke's son whose name is advertised prominently as editor of a magazine, although no peers' sons have yet been found to brave the task of editing a London daily. Then we have great nobles, with their names on their carts, directly supplying the public with coals, and a noble earl has established a fruit and

vegetable shop hard by his great mansion near Charing Cross.

“As for aristocratic lady milliners, they may be found by the dozen, whilst a gentleman of ancient family, who is married to a peer’s daughter, is a sort of *entrepreneur* for making all the arrangements for balls and parties. Then, again, up to twenty years ago it was considered a shuddering impossibility for the ‘upper classes’ to travel second-class, whereas now many who mix in the best society unblushingly go third.”

Of course this is all really so much to the good. The mighty are not fallen ; they are merely coming down from the dress-circle of spectators into the arena of real life, and laying aside the hollow dignity of position for the solid dignity of action. And the change is far-reaching. Even of those who do not actually earn in the sense that their income varies with their exertions, many nevertheless deliberately plan out some useful course of life and pursue it with all the zeal and devotion of the business-man. And in so doing they are both proving the truth of Boswell’s “*un gentilhomme est toujours gentilhomme*” in a much nobler sense than his, and they are giving a practical answer to John Ball’s question.

In fact, the *rapprochement* between classes is no longer exceptional, it is becoming universal. Sir R. Giffen, in his *Essays in Finance*, showed us ten years or more ago how the whole “composition” of the community is changing, how the very wealthy are

giving place to the moderately wealthy, and the very poor to the moderately comfortable.

Especially clear is it that the skilled artisan class is receiving into its ranks the unskilled labourer and the residual class; while the professional class is growing rapidly, recruited largely, no doubt, from the hitherto leisured class. It is little wonder, then, that the doctrine of "Klassenkampf" finds slow acceptance in England, and there is small fear that the day will ever come when English Society will find itself divided into two camps, fighting for pre-eminence.

Obliteration of the main lines will of course leave room for infinite gradations to be perceived; we need never fear a dead level of mediocrity. Nor is it likely that industrial warfare will cease as the distinction between wage-earner and capitalist becomes less marked. Already it is being succeeded by rivalry between different branches of production, and an entirely new series of economic problems are opening up before the inquirer. But whatever struggles remain for the future, it seems likely that in England at any rate class hatred has had its day.



## VI

### THE INDUSTRIAL RESIDUUM<sup>1</sup>

I AM particularly anxious to make it clear from the first that nothing of what I have to say applies to the class of genuinely self-supporting wage-earners, to those workers whom we may call the true industrials. At every turn of their daily life the two classes meet and influence each other, they are connected by every tie of mutual service and dis-service; to the casual observer their dress, their food, their living accommodation, even their work, is the same in kind if not in quantity. Yet striking right through this superficial resemblance, and reducing to comparative insignificance (for our present purpose) all social and family alliance, we may find a fundamental distinction which can only be intensified by any attempts to obliterate it by artificial means. It is a difference of character and disposition, and it is to this difference of character and its economic results, rather than to any numerical investigation, that I specially wish to draw attention. The qualities which are characteristic of

<sup>1</sup> Read at the Economic Club, 10th January 1893, and published in the *Economic Journal* for December 1893.

members of the Residuum are not distributed with any reference to money income, and for this reason it is impossible to base a calculation of their numbers upon any estimate of earnings. Moreover, I know of no important general proposition that can be laid down about all the individuals who are in receipt of small incomes, nor about those in receipt of large incomes ; except, perhaps, that the latter will be more comfortable than the former, and this is only an approximate generalisation. But by taking as a ground of classification some fundamental characteristic of the individual, some disposition or habit which will determine his actions, it may be possible to mark out a development in human nature which will repay study. The most trivial accident of birth or fortune may enable a true member of the Residuum to conceal himself in that section of society which Mr. Giffen characterises as the upper barbarians, or may force a respectable man to take temporary refuge in an East End slum ; but while such freaks of fortune would hopelessly disarrange figures, they will in no way affect our knowledge of how the one or the other will be likely to act under given circumstances.

What then are the characteristics of the class ? Measured by the economic standard they are rather negative than positive. The ideal economic man, as we know, is remarkable for his foresight and self-control ; in the Residuum these qualities are entirely absent. In place of foresight we find the happy faith which never fails, that "something will turn up," and instead of self-control the impulsive reckless-

ness which may lead indifferently to a prodigal generosity, or an almost inconceivable selfishness. The true type of this class lives in the present moment only; not only is he without foresight,—he is almost without memory, in the sense that his past is so completely past that he has no more organised experience to refer to than a child. Hence his life is one incoherent jumble from beginning to end; it would be impossible to make even a connected story out of it, for every day merely repeats the mistakes, the follies and mishaps of yesterday; there is no development in it; all is aimless and drifting.

This description may seem overdrawn, but it is based upon an accumulation of experience to which it is difficult to give tangible form. To fully realise the facts it is necessary to live amongst these people, to see them day after day, watch their extraordinary freaks, and feel the burden of their total irresponsibility. But I should like to suggest to those who are more familiar with the wealthy section of the Residuum, whether they do not find exactly the same characteristics amongst people whom mere accident of birth has separated from their natural surroundings. There is the same insuperable aversion to steady work, the same self-indulgence, the same eager devotion to trifles and absorption in the interests of the moment. All that they need to complete their likeness to their poorer brethren are the dirty homes and squalid surroundings, and if they were left for only a week to their own exertions there can be little doubt that these also would appear.

This absence of the economic virtues is, of course, only one aspect of a very strongly marked type of character; it accompanies a low order of intellect, and a degradation of the natural affections to something little better than animal instincts. It would take me too long to go far into this matter, but in corroboration of the view I may indicate briefly one or two of the more striking facts which we constantly come across in dealing with these people. Take, for instance, their frequent inability to give the number of the house in which they live, or even the name of the street; when this is combined with their complete ignorance of the points of the compass, and failure to distinguish between the right and left hand, the rational man has dropped very low on the scale towards the sagacious animal, which finds its home easily enough, but has no power of communicating its whereabouts in language.

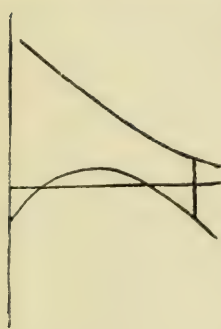
Or take, again, the difficulty they have in giving any coherent account of even quite recent events. A little skill in leading questions will elicit almost any statement you please, and this from no wilful untruthfulness, but from mere confusion of mind. Interesting evidence might also be gained by a student who had time and patience to investigate their vocabulary; it is limited in the extreme, and their power of expression except by means of gesticulation is proportionately small.

It would be hard to attribute this intellectual failing entirely to absence of anything to express; sometimes, I am convinced, there must be actual

suffering from the inability to give articulate utterance to the mental chaos within. Nevertheless, we are forced to recognise that, on the whole, these people are as undeveloped—or as degraded—on the side of their affections as of their intellect. The most striking proof of this is the looseness of the family tie, and the absence of all feeling of mutual responsibility between parents and children and brothers and sisters. The children drift away as soon as they become self-supporting, sometimes before, and are often completely lost sight of at an age when they most need the affection and care of their parents. It is very unusual to come across a family of this type where several members are not missing, and very common to find an old couple with a large family scattered about in London, but without communication with any of them.

The economic side of this character may perhaps be best illustrated by reference to the curve in which Professor Jevons expresses the basis of his theory of labour; and which I have copied in the diagram. The horizontal line is the neutral line between pleasure and pain; the upper line represents the increase of pleasure derived from an increase of the reward to labour, the lower curve the increase of pain derived from an increase of labour. Now for the theory which it supports, this curve is of interest mainly when approaching the point where pleasure gained is equal to pain endured; the point, therefore, when the labourer begins to question the

advisability of continuing. As descriptive of a process it seems to illustrate the mind not so much of the ordinary industrial of to-day, working under ordinary conditions, as of the member of the Residuum. You notice that it assumes a very rapid fall in the final utility of the reward to labour; but in our modern organisation the use of money and the habit of looking to the needs of the future combine to make the final utility of the reward as nearly constant as possible among the working classes. If a man is accumulating money, the final utility will, of course, diminish, and he may in time reach the critical point where his pleasures and pains balance, and retire from business. But the ordinary wage-earner when he receives his pay on Saturday nights



is as far off the critical point as when he goes to work on Monday morning. If the idea of leaving his work does cross his mind, it is banished by the thought of not getting it again when he wants it; the mere possibility of a rise in the final utility of the reward

is enough to prevent its falling, and for him the upper curve would be far more true if it were almost a straight line.

But for the member of the Residuum who has no fears for the future the curve represents a constantly recurring process. With his debts cleared off, and a week's wages in hand, the final utility of the reward is so small that he has absolutely no inducement to work; the smallest temptation will keep him away,

the smallest inconvenience cause him to throw up the job; and it is not until he is destitute and his credit exhausted, that he finds himself beginning his curve again, to repeat the process as often as he gets the chance. It is, of course, only a question of degree. I suppose it occurs once or twice in every man's life to question whether it is all worth while; but an event which is to the normal man a crisis has become with the Residuum a habit, making little or no impression, and leaving no lesson.

In itself, and apart from any special incapacity, this disposition is not altogether an unfavourable one, even from an economic point of view; and the man to whom the future is merely the infinite possibility of something turning up, is so far in a better position for making his bargain in the labour market than the man who is burdened with all the cares of a lifetime. It is the indifferent seller who gets the best price for his wares; and this may partly account for the high wages which clever good-for-nothings sometimes command when they choose to work. But this point is insignificant in view of the facts: *first*, that the disposition is in the highest degree unfavourable to the acquirement of skill, and that though sometimes combined with natural genius it is more often allied to incapacity; and *second*, that though the good-for-nothing is indifferent when the question is of continuing a bargain, he rarely approaches one until he finds the necessities of life running alarmingly short,—until, that is, the claims of the future have become the needs of the present.

From the point of view of happiness there is perhaps more to be said for the disposition. It is difficult to avoid the thought that the facts represented by the curve have possibilities of pleasure about them, which are wanting where the reward of labour has always a fixed and moderate utility; it means an alternation between leisure, excitement, and intense gratification, which might conceivably yield a larger total of happiness than the somewhat low and monotonous level of satisfaction which the regular wage-earner gets out of his reward. It must be borne in mind also, that in estimating the happiness of the Residuum we must leave almost entirely out of account all pleasures or pains of anticipation; and if, as I believe, the worst of pain lies in its anticipation, while the best of pleasure is in its realisation, the balance in favour of the disposition in question may tend to become a large one.

Taking this type of character as one of our data, we may now ask about its effect upon the economic position of its possessor. It will be found to result invariably in his permanent failure to maintain himself (and those legally dependent upon him) in that standard of comfort which is considered necessary, and insisted upon by the community. It is, indeed, inevitable that this should be so; want of the economic virtues involves economic failure, and no artificial social arrangements can alter the fact that the man in any rank of life who is not self-supporting is an economic failure. We cannot, however, without some limitations convert the proposition, and say

that all who fail to be self-supporting are members of the Residuum.

I have already alluded to those who fall from the ranks of independence through merely temporary misfortune; they owe their failure to the accident of circumstance alone, and not to any inherent defects. It is unfortunately true that long-continued misfortune is only too likely to develop these defects, but until this has taken place there is always hope. There is another class which I should like to exclude, even though their failure to be self-supporting may be more or less permanent. I refer to the large class of women workers, whose earnings have to be supplemented to enable them to live in the standard to which they naturally belong. Their position presents a genuine economic problem, though not quite the one before us now. Looked at from the point of view of exchange, women's labour seems at present to be in the position of what is known as a "by-product"; it shares a joint cost of production with men's labour, but is so much less in requisition that the latter stands in the position of the main product, and receives by far the greater proportion of remuneration. Some of the histories of joint production have been very interesting; for instance that of soda and hydrochloric acid, where the latter, originally a waste product, has, through the new uses discovered for it, taken the lead, and reduced soda to the position of a by-product. It is conceivable that as the most fitting uses are found for women's labour it may advance more nearly to the dignity of being the main product,

and thus be able to claim a more equal share of remuneration.

But no such hope can be entertained with regard to the true Residuum; their labour is distinguished by its inferiority alone, and mere inferiority will never find a market; it differs not in kind, but in degree of utility only, and it is inconceivable that a use should be found for it which would not be better supplied by the class from which it has fallen.

Bearing in mind these exceptions—women workers and the subjects of temporary misfortune—the Residuum seems to fall more or less obviously into two divisions, according to the nature of the services rendered. The one consists of those who follow what, for want of a better name, I will call factitious or superfluous employments; the other of men who possess a limited amount of skill, and supplement regular wage-earners in the main industries.

The first class is probably the larger in number (at any rate in poorer London), and the most hopelessly excluded from the true industrial ranks. It is a curious product of modern times, and I doubt whether it has its counterpart in history. It is usually assumed that in proportion as labour lacks skill, it falls back upon brute force, mere strength of muscle; but here we have a race living, and to some extent thriving, who have no specialised skill, no “trade in their hands,” as they will say, and who yet have only the minimum of physical strength. A sort of superficial sharpness you may find in some of them, especially those who get their living in the streets;

but it is very shallow, and rarely amounts to more than a ready adaptability of manner and a shrewd facility in saying what is expected. If placed in circumstances which are new to them, or which call for any promptness of action or readiness of resource, their incapacity is immediately apparent. Their mission in life is to pick up the odds and ends of work which are let fall through carelessness or indolence by other people, and their one economic virtue is that of being "on the spot." A typical instance of this virtue is found in the protégé of dustmen, who is technically known as the "follower-up." Say that the dustman has to empty six dustbins on a round, and that his cart will only hold the contents of five and a half; here is the opportunity for the follower-up, who saves him the trouble of returning, and gets so much a barrow-load for his pains.

To the immense multiplication of subsidiary employments which is due to the existence of a Residuum, I need only allude; any one familiar with working London knows them only too well. I do not, of course, refer to the genuine industrial development of subsidiary employment arising from the organisation of labour, but to a multiplication of minor services of very doubtful benefit to the community. Compare the legitimate and natural function of the milkman, arising from the perishable nature of his commodity, with that of the oil-man, the coal-man, the wood-man, the coke-man, the coster of every description who haunts the streets of working London,

and saves his customers the trouble of going to the shop at the corner. It may of course be argued that this is a legitimate and even desirable service, but those who recognise as the type of this class, not the milkman, but the tally-man—that evil genius of the poor—will share my doubts. The whole method of retail industry differs from that pursued in higher classes of the community; there the purchaser sends her orders to the tradesman, here the tradesman takes his goods to the purchaser. It is a difference of the imaginative faculty which well illustrates the disposition of the Residuum; for the educated person, anticipating her needs, the sight of the store's list is sufficient to provoke a purchase, but for the uneducated person the sight and touch of the commodities themselves is found to be necessary, and these prove so stimulating that debts are frequently incurred for comparatively useless articles.

Other representatives of the class are the girl who cleans steps, the old woman who minds babies, the knocker-up who will waken you at any hour for 2d. a week, the self-appointed commissionaire who stations himself outside public-houses ready for odd jobs, and so on, with a variety which is to be equalled only by the various forms of indolence which creates the demand for those minor service people. For the most part they are entirely dependent for occupation upon the wage-earners themselves, and it is evident that this limitation of their usefulness renders their mode of life in the highest degree precarious. They are exposed to every breath of "bad times" which

excites the smallest desire for economising in their patrons. Many of them are of no real use,—they are even of negative value, for the costermonger who knows his business is as well able to enforce a purchase as the organ-grinder who gets paid to go away. Hence the demand for their services is an unnatural one, and would not make itself felt for a day if it were not artificially fostered. I think it is Roscher who has urged the necessity of taking into consideration the *intensity* of a demand as well as its extent; if I may apply the term in a somewhat different sense, the demand for these services may be described as having the least degree of intensity which is compatible with its being effective. That it is effective at all is due to the peculiar conditions of supply, which we shall have to note presently. It might be thought that in some degree this lack of intensity might be compensated by extent. I believe that in many of the industries which supply the working classes the comparative stability of demand in face of bad times is to be accounted for by their large numbers, cheap goods for the many forming a safer basis for trading than expensive goods for the few. But members of this class never serve a large connection. Some dozen streets will comprise the ordinary coster's round, the charwoman has her half-dozen patrons, the coal and oil-men have their regular customers, and when these fail them they rarely succeed in establishing a new groove.

As a natural link between this class and the next, I should like to refer, in passing, to the charwoman.

In the East End she is called in, like other casual labour, when the mistress of a household is unable or disinclined for any reason to do her own work, and the irregularity of an occupation dependent upon such causes quite defies calculation. She probably had her origin in the West, and is a typical instance of the development and results of partial employment. Under any satisfactory arrangement a household will find within its own internal economy sufficient labour power to carry on its necessary and normal work; but the modern system of intermittent cleaning, by which the dirt is allowed to accumulate until the family goes out of town, makes it possible to work with a smaller regular staff, supplementing it from the Residuum upon occasion. Here the charwoman belongs to the class which supplements the labour of regular wage-earners; she is intermittently absorbed into their ranks, and rejected again.

The main body of this class consists almost entirely of inferior workmen, or of men who suffer from an exaggerated abhorrence of that regular work which is to all of us more or less of a burden. Here we find a certain amount of skill, but it is either insufficiently developed, or else combined with mental or physical defects which neutralise its utility. It is worth while to distinguish between the men who do inferior work and the men who do their work in an inferior manner. Inferior work is generally, if not always, badly paid for, but it is not necessarily subject to any great irregularity; as we have already noticed, the market for cheap goods has elements of stability about it which

are wanting in the smaller markets for highly finished commodities.

It is the work of the inferior man which is subject to the worst forms of irregularity, and which serves as a barometer to indicate depressions and elevations in the industrial atmosphere. These are the men who are always falling into work and out again ; they are the first to be turned off as work slackens, and the last to be taken on as it improves. It is only when employers are straining to make the most of a favourable turn that they will employ labour which is dear at any price ; and frequently the men will anticipate their sentence, and drop away before the actual dismissal is pronounced ; they have worked their spell, and are now ready for their interval of leisure.

According to the ordinary laws of competition we should expect to find this class of labour employed at a lower price than the more highly skilled and reliable ; and that this is far from being generally the case is a fact which requires explanation. There are several causes at work, the action of Trade Unions to a slight extent, but mainly a combination of public sentiment and private sophistry, which tend to make employers reluctant to offer a lower than a prevailing wage. It is very noticeable in talking to employers, especially among the minor industries, how they nearly always assume a defensive attitude against any suspicion that they are paying less than an equitable wage. They will urge upon your attention that any apparent deficiency is accounted for by short hours or light work, or compensated by some

privilege; facts generally true enough, and deriving their main interest from the proof they afford that an equitable standard is recognised, and that departure from it is not thought to be sufficiently justified by ability to obtain substitutes at the same or a lower rate.

Thus it comes about that inferior workmen will frequently be employed at a rate equal to that of the more skilled in the trade, but the apparent anomaly rights itself in other ways. In piece-work, of course, the want of skill tells directly upon the amount of earnings by the smaller quantity of work turned out; but even where the work is by time, the economic laws avenge themselves by the system of partial employment which is creeping into industry. At first sight this would seem to be only an extension of season employment compensated by high wages, such as inevitably occurs in the building trades. But the partial employment of the Residuum exists side by side with regular employment in the same trade, and is a question not of necessity but of convenience. The system is widespread, and may now be found in almost any department of industry. To take an example, it is now quite a common thing for even respectable firms of solicitors, stockbrokers, auctioneers, and so on, to employ a permanent staff insufficient to their needs, relying with perfect confidence on supplementing it from the Residuum when there is a press of work. That is to say, sooner than pay a clerk a comparatively low retaining fee, for the sake of having his services when needed, they

will take him on for two or three weeks at a time, giving 30s. to £2 a week, and turn him off again as work slackens, with absolute indifference as to what becomes of him in the interval. All the main manufacturing industries, such as bootmaking and tailoring, and smaller ones, such as fur workers, feather workers, and trimming makers, have the same fringe of inferior men, only partially employed. (The dockers of course are a case in point, but with them the issue has been so confused that I do not venture to bring them into the question.) That this development is greatly to be deprecated in the true interests of labour will, I suppose, hardly be questioned. If we must choose between two evils, a low regular wage is infinitely more salutary for the average Englishman than high earnings alternating with periods of idleness; and while the original degradation of a labourer to the ranks of the partially employed is generally due to his dislike of persistent work or want of skill, yet it is evident that the system itself tends to intensify the causes which give rise to it.

In my general dislike of partial employment and its results, I feel myself on fairly safe ground. In certain conclusions to which it has led me I am more doubtful, and will therefore put them in the form of questions, to which I hope to get some answers. The first is: So long as employers have open to them the alternative of partial employment, is it not contrary to the true interests of labour (at least of the Residuum) to bring any pressure to bear, whether by

means of trade unions, or through public opinion, towards enforcing a minimum rate of wages?

The second question is: Whether any merely local employment agencies, which, without doing anything to break up the immobility of labour, enable employers to find an immediate supply at any moment, do not greatly encourage the system of partial employment, and so directly militate against stability in the relation between employers and employed?

Of course it may be urged that whenever an employer finds a workman through such agencies, a workman finds employment, and so the benefit is mutual. In individual cases that may be so to some extent, but we have to look at the tendency of the system as a whole, and that tendency does seem to be towards irregularity and uncertainty. Moreover, for the Residuum the effect is not altogether good, even in the particular case. A member of this class who feels that there is an institution prepared to reinstate him as soon as he drops out will take little trouble to keep to his work, and will become fixed in the unsettled habits which are his ruin.

When we turn to the question how the supply of this reserve labour power is produced and maintained, we are met by the difficulty that we have to deal with causes that are not strictly speaking economic. There could be no greater mistake than to suppose that the Residuum is self-supporting in the sense that the standard of comfort in which it lives is determined by its actual earnings, and for this

reason it cannot be handled in the same way as other classes of the industrial community.

Professor Sidgwick, in discussing the question whether there can be said to be a normal rate of wages corresponding to the cost of production of labour in any class, considers the doctrine to be most applicable in the case of the worst paid labour of which the supply has to be mainly self-maintained. Here a diminution in wage is thought to act as a check to numbers, and a rise to be followed by an increase. But he points out, also, that the worst paid labour of all is that of classes in towns kept up to a considerable extent by the degradation of members of other classes, and therefore unhappily exempted from the economic necessity of keeping up their own numbers. That is to say, in this class the ordinary economic forces which tend to bring about an equilibrium between the wages of labour and the cost of its maintenance, which in the long run is its cost of production, are counteracted by the invasion from other sources. Thus it comes about that to look for any relation between the cost of production of the Residuum and its economic value is—to borrow an illustration—like looking for the relation between the cost of production of cracked bells and *their* value. Members of the Residuum are all cracked bells; in nine cases out of ten they have cost as much to produce as the self-supporting wage-earner, frequently more. A child of this class will not cost a farthing less to bring up—at any rate, to the age of twelve or fourteen—than the child of the

skilled artisan ; for what it lacks in proper food and clothing it makes up for in medical attendance and physic, which the Residuum consumes in really startling quantities. Moreover, the degradation into this class is frequently from a standard so high above it as to be practically incommensurable. What comparison can be made between the education of the professional man and the miserable services he can render when he has fallen into the Residuum ? Whether we regard the class as reproducing itself, or as largely supplemented from without, it is in either case guilty of an economic blunder ; it fails utterly and entirely to regulate its numbers with any reference to its wage-earning powers.

I am inclined to doubt whether this failure is mainly caused by the invasion of its ranks by degraded members of other classes. This upward and downward movement is always going on, and throughout all grades of the industrial organisation ; no class is so self-contained as to form, strictly speaking, a non-competing group. Perhaps the only real difference is that while other classes give and take, the Residuum only takes. Its members cannot fall lower, and it is seldom indeed that they rise higher. Although the industrial organism is very merciful in the way in which it allows a man chance after chance of proving whether there is any stuff in him, it very rarely succeeds in reabsorbing one of this class ; the defects of character are practically ineradicable, at any rate under the present system.

But for the great reason why this class fails in

economic elasticity, why it fails to give way before the pressure of circumstances, and why therefore the supply continues to be maintained, we must, I believe, look elsewhere. It is to be found in the fact that it is not self-supporting, that its standard of living is in no way determined by itself, but by the sense of the community to which it belongs, and which for many reasons cannot suffer it to fall below a certain level. And if we need evidence that in England this level is far above that to which the Residuum is capable of falling without danger of actual extermination, we need only question immigrants as to their willingness to return to their native lands.

One reason why they are not self-supporting is to be found in the nature of their employment. It is not so much that their earnings are insufficient to live upon, but that it takes a very high order of intellect to be self-supporting on an intermittent income, and the Residuum is of all classes the least qualified to achieve independence under such conditions.

On the other hand, it is the fact that they are not self-supporting, but are largely subsidised from without, which alone makes it possible for the present system of employment to continue. This, of course, involves us in a vicious circle; but it is characteristic of social problems to be vicious circles, and all that can be done—at any rate on paper—is to point out the links in the chain, and hope that the practical man will some day come along and break through at the weakest place.

One important link we may find in the various sources from which the earnings of this class are subsidised. Of the Poor Law relief and public and private charities (a little within £5,000,000 in London) I need say little here; every one knows more or less accurately that very large sums are distributed among the poorer classes by an expensive machinery, and by far the greater part of this goes to members of the Residuum. Some of them, indeed, the criminal classes, dispense with the machinery, and effect the redistribution for themselves; so far they are less of a burden on the community, but for the most part they are exactly on a level with their weaker brethren; they work occasionally, when they can, and when it is convenient; at other times they help themselves, and live without work.

But large as this recognised subsidy of public and private charity is, I believe it to be unimportant in comparison with the tax levied by the Residuum upon its neighbours. It is very difficult to give any adequate idea of this; it is paid mostly in kind, and comes practically to free board and lodging through a considerable part of the year. So far as concerns free lodging, I can give some actual evidence. I have here a list of twenty-nine families, with a record of their movements during the past three years. During that time two of the families had lived in three houses, eighteen in four houses, seven in five houses, and two in six houses. Of course there is only one reason for these constant removals; that is, arrears of rent. The amount owing in each instance

at the last address varies from 15s. to £4; further back than that it was impossible to get exact information, but it would very rarely be under 20s., and very often over. As an extreme, but by no means an isolated instance, I may cite one which has come under my notice within the last few weeks. Early in 1892 the family took rooms in Holborn, stayed there ten weeks, then left owing £6 for rent; they then took a place in Clerkenwell, stayed there four months, and then moved on into Hoxton, leaving a debt of £7 : 4s. to the landlord; they have been seven weeks at their present address, and already owe over £2, which will certainly never be paid.

It is clear, therefore, that such a list of flittings as I have made represents in itself a large amount of free lodging, quite distinct from the recognised charitable shelters; and I could have increased the list almost indefinitely had it been worth while. The sufferers from this tax are people little better off than the Residuum itself, and the root of the evil lies in the London system of sub-letting large houses. When a working man with a young family takes a house at £30 a year, and heavy rates and taxes, it is ruin to him to let his extra rooms lie empty, and almost equal ruin to get, as he so often does, a member of the Residuum as tenant. Of course the risk is by this time a fully recognised one, and is covered by the heavy rents which paying tenants have to meet, and which sometimes enable a fortunate householder to live rent free.

The same system of sharing a house among several families is largely responsible for the tax that is levied in food. You will find if you try that it is a practical impossibility to drink your tea if there is some one in the next room who has none to drink. Next door makes all the difference. I have known women live for weeks on the friendly scraps let fall from the landlady's table, and a family of children can always make good an extensive claim. Some striking evidence might also be got from the small general shops which abound in poorer London, if they would only keep books, but they never do. I have no doubt that most of my twenty-nine families have accounts at several shops, of which nothing will be paid until they have exhausted their credit in the neighbourhood, but the shopkeepers themselves are frequently uncertain how much is due to them.

Here is a short statement of the financial position of two representative families.

The first is a man and wife with eight children, the only wage-earner at the time in question being the eldest boy. The liabilities of the family amounted to about £6 borrowed in various amounts from a friend, a mother-in-law, a brother, and a brother-in-law, £3:15s. owing for rent, 30s. to the milkman, and an indefinite amount to the provision shop. The family needs for the current week were met by the boy's earnings, 7s., by pawning the father's boots and the son's best clothes, by a continued free supply of milk from the friendly milkman, and of provisions on credit at the rate of half a

pound of butter and four half-quartern loaves per day from the general shop.

The second family consisted of a man and wife and four children, whose position was simplified by the fact that the landlady kept a general shop. They owed £4 for rent and 23s. for food, and had pawned for £6. Their plan of living was to continue to board and lodge free, the landlady saying that she could not stop them now for fear of losing all they owed; and their only other source of income was an occasional ticket from a neighbouring church.

Now if we take into consideration all these sources, the Poor Law relief, voluntary charity, and the tax levied upon all with whom the Residuum come into immediate contact, we may hesitate to attempt any exact estimate, but we can hardly doubt that the subsidy made towards the support of this class is very large indeed. What are the consequences? The chief, and one which might be most naturally expected, is its almost complete immobility within very narrow limits. No prospect of improvement, not even a promise of regular work, will induce these people to leave a neighbourhood which they have tried, and not found wanting. They have no confidence in themselves, but they have a confidence fully justified in the social arrangements in which they have been developed, and which for them constitutes what they call Providence. Within certain limits, indeed, their life is a constant flitting, but they merely circulate from street to street within a very narrow area, and the causes of their moving have

nothing whatever to do with the labour market. No Act of Settlement ever succeeded in establishing an immobility so rigid as this, for Acts of Settlement have at least the merit of kindling a rebellious desire to move.

It may perhaps be said that three years is not very long to test a man's immobility by, but I think it is sufficient for my purpose if we bear in mind that during those three years he has been subjected to a constantly recurring pressure as great as any that ever is likely to be brought to bear upon him; that each removal represents a small crisis, and is the alternative to—if not the actual result of—a forcible ejection.

Given this immobility of a class of labour of which the earnings are largely subsidised, we have all the conditions which favour the capricious demand for its services which I have noticed. Employers have no need to make sure that their resources are equal to the demand that may be made upon them, for here is an inexhaustible reservoir maintained outside their doors, upon which they can draw at any moment. And that large section of the Residuum, which without skill or strength serve the caprice rather than the needs of their customers, have no need to strengthen their hold upon industry and make themselves indispensable, for they also know that they have inexhaustible resources upon which to fall back.

I cannot leave the subject without alluding to the question of the influence of this class upon those just above it. So far as concerns the labour market I

believe that its power for harm has been exaggerated, and that in the long run it competes with the genuine self-supporting wage-earners very little, that all questions of wages and hours and employment settle themselves without reference to it. A steady-going efficient workman is never displaced to make room for one of this class, employers know their own interests too well; and it is not until the better supply is exhausted that they have recourse to the Residuum. Like poor land it is only called into use when an increased demand makes it profitable to employ expensive labour, and like poor land it drops out of use again as soon as the demand subsides. And if I may follow the analogy a little further, its utilisation is more likely to accompany an increase than a diminution of the return to the more efficient workers.

With regard, again, to the minor service section of the Residuum, we must note that so far as its services are of any value at all, it is the wage-earners themselves who reap the advantage. It is their substitute for the domestic servant, and without venturing any opinion as to the desirability of such a substitute we may at least point out that it is harmless in that it does not compete with regulars; it serves a class which must choose between it or nothing, which must either do its own work or employ help fitfully as means will allow.

But though, as I think, the Residuum does not injure the position of the wage-earner by competition in the labour market, it is a drag upon it in a more

direct way. I have pointed out to how large an extent it is dependent upon credit and charity, and by far the greater part of this credit and charity is derived from the wage class, either directly or by way of high rents and heavy rates. The cost of living is increased to an extent which is probably far from being compensated for by the services actually rendered.

Suppose it possible that by removing the obstacles to the mobility of this class the reservoir of labour could be spread abroad over the country, and gradually reabsorbed into the industrial organism. How would the change make itself felt? In the regular industries there would be less elasticity, less encouragement to season work, more need of organisation. The fur trade, for instance, instead of dismissing all but the best hands in the winter, and taking on large numbers of inferior workers for a short summer season, would have to increase its regular staff, and in order to keep them employed to equalise its rate of production throughout the year. A similar policy would have to be observed throughout all industry, and it is not impossible that with greater regularity in production there would be fewer commercial crises.

The alternative to dispersion now urged upon us is organisation, but I believe it will prove that the most which organisation can do for the Residuum is to define the hopelessness of its position more sharply. We have had a striking illustration of this in the recent movements of dock labour.

After all is said and done, organisation is only one amongst many means of self-help; it is impossible to organise dead matter from the outside, and the true Residuum is economically dead. It may be possible to galvanise it into a temporary appearance of life, to raise up a social monster that will be the terror of the community; but the best that can really be hoped for it is that it should gradually wear itself away, or in the coming generation be reabsorbed into the industrial life on which it is at present a mere parasite. And the tendency to this issue must probably be delayed by any scheme, however well devised, which seeks to deal with it in the mass and as a permanent institution, or in any way fosters its reluctance to yield to the pressure of circumstance.

## VII

### THE BURDEN OF SMALL DEBTS

AMONGST the many financial difficulties of the wage-earner two are pre-eminent at the present moment ; the provision for emergencies and the equalisation of his income. They are difficulties alike in their nature and calling for very similar solutions, and leading also when unsolved to the same financial embarrassments ; but it is only in comparatively recent times that the latter is coming to be recognised as a serious problem. The necessity for providing against the inevitable "rainy day" has existed from time immemorial, and all sorts of expedients and machinery have been devised to meet the need. The necessity of spreading out an intermittent income over the whole year has only recently assumed large proportions among wage-earners, and they are as yet ill prepared to meet it and to adapt themselves to the inconveniences of the long vacation. Such expedients as they do resort to are for the most part obvious enough, but clumsy and expensive, and to my thinking altogether on the wrong lines. Moreover they have a tendency when freely indulged in—as in large towns—to supersede the older and wiser

methods of providing against emergencies. A man who finds that he can tide over slack times without troubling himself to make provision beforehand, naturally yields to the unconscious inference that he will be able to get through other difficulties in the same way; and the tendency is for him to place his whole financial position upon a different and less sound basis.

There are, of course, as every economic unit soon finds out, two ways of meeting financial exigencies; two ways, that is, in addition to the obvious but not always possible one of working. We can anticipate our difficulties, either in general or in detail, and sacrifice something of the present to make provision against them; or we can wait until they come and then draw upon our future resources—sacrifice the future to provide for the present. It is of this latter course, and of the divers ways in which it may be achieved, that I have now to speak; and also of its efficiency as compared with the former.

Of course the old-fashioned morality goes in favour of thrift as opposed to credit, but I am interested to find to what a large extent the advantages of credit are now being preached as well as practised. The pawnbroker especially is extolled by many who have no dealings with him as the “poor man’s friend,” and the system of credit at the general shop is very generally regarded as the one salvation of the wage-earner in bad times. The money-lender has not yet lived down the accumulated antipathies of ages; but if the pawnbroker is good, the money-

lender surely is better. Thus the prestige which attaches to credit in the commercial world is fast being transferred to the region of private indebtedness, and as we turn to the poorer classes we find ourselves regarding it as tinged with a curious kind of semi-professional, semi-sentimental benevolence.

From this point of view the uncertainty of the future becomes a powerful argument against anticipatory provision and in favour of credit. There is no doubt that saving is often regarded, and perhaps justifiably regarded, as the sacrifice of present and certain advantages for the sake of meeting evils which may possibly never occur, or which, if they do occur, may be met in some way not yet foreseen. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" is to a certain extent good business, and finds its realisation in the general disinclination to make provision for an old age which may never come. And though I have never heard it openly argued that a burden may very likely be escaped altogether by putting it into the future, yet no doubt the possibility is vaguely present to the minds of those who practise some form of indebtedness as their financial *modus operandi*.

Of course the uncertainty of the future really tells both ways from a rational point of view; and it must be argued as against credit that while our present resources are known our future resources are not, that we *may* be piling up a burden for a time of special misfortune, and that in any case we increase it by *paying* instead of *receiving* interest. But from an *irrational* point of view the uncertainty tells

almost entirely in the direction of sacrificing the future ; where the reasoning faculties are undeveloped the psychological pressure is all in favour of the present. A very small want of to-day looms large enough to obscure a great necessity in the future, and it is useless to point out how the price of a few pots of beer would pay the sick-club subscription ; arithmetic has no power over a thirsty soul when drink is within reach. Nor can the vision of future sickness overcome the assuredness of present health and strength ; " I were never ill in my life before," some prostrate worker will say in aggrieved surprise that *he* should have been afflicted after all those years of immunity. Like many others, he argues from present to future, so makes no provision and is taken unawares. Even when the need of the future might be thought quite assured, as in season trades, the undeveloped mind refuses to grasp it ; the combination of a large town and good money coming in makes a present so rich in possibilities, that the future fades before it and imagination shrinks from contemplating the barren meagreness of the six weeks when there will be no money, just as the child's thoughts will turn away during playtime from the dryness of the lesson hour. And when the barren weeks have come the possibilities of the future seem inexhaustible in comparison with the present restraints, and any obligation will be cheerfully incurred as an escape from the pinch of present poverty.

Thus it comes about that there is a powerful instinct towards the credit system of meeting emer-

gencies and equalising incomes, and many and ingenious are the devices by which a working-man may now forestall his future. If we attempt to classify these they seem to fall roughly under three heads, though I doubt whether the classification will hold good for anything more than purposes of convenience. For those purposes I propose to consider the various forms of credit—or as I should prefer to call it “indebtedness”—under the heads of Borrowing, Pawning, and Not-paying.

Of borrowing there may be said to be three typical forms. There is first the regular business transaction with the ordinary loan society or money office; “money lent on personal security in any amount.” How much of this goes on one may roughly estimate by the number of loan offices which flourish in or around working London, and by consulting the records of the County Court. There are eighty-two loan offices in the *London Directory*, and by far the greater number of these are in the poorer neighbourhoods. The ordinary rate of interest charged is 10 per cent, but this is often doubled or more by the system of fines and charges. Preliminary charges are made for “inquiries” into the character or solvency of the borrower, and these have to be paid whether the loan is granted or not. Then a charge is made for every letter written, and a fine imposed for every delay in repayment. I am told that the more respectable firms prefer to charge 20 per cent right out, and have nothing to do with extras. This is considered a fair rate of interest, and a loan office

is likely to win its case in court unless it has charged above 25 per cent ; higher than that the judge is apt to consider unreasonable. As a matter of fact this does not seem to be more than a fair cover for risk, if we consider that the pawnbroker charges 24 per cent, and has perfect security ; yet the pawnbroker is regarded as a respectable tradesman, or even philanthropist.

These loans are easily got, and for any amount, and there is no doubt that the facility makes the poor extraordinarily reckless in the way in which, and the reasons for which, they will run into debt. No doubt they are often enabled in this way to tide over a bad time, or to make a fresh start ; but more frequently still the burden of the debt only drags the sinking man deeper down, and makes it impossible for him to extricate himself. Very often again the occasion of the debt will be nothing more than a Bank Holiday or a bean-feast or some other form of spree, and the sort of thing which happens then is for a man to go to a loan office, giving the name of a friend or perhaps two, as security, and borrow a pound, or two, or three, as the case may be ; the friend then goes to another office and gives *his* name, and so between them they raise a nice little sum for their festivity. Before the pound is paid off it probably becomes two, and if it goes into court the costs will run it up still further. To give some idea of the amount of this borrowing that goes on : there were dealt with in the Shoreditch County Court last year 12,600 cases for amounts varying from 1s. 6d. to £50 ; these of course

covered very various kinds of debts, rent, general shops, tallyman, etc., but loans formed a very large number, and were frequently for such a small amount as to seem hardly worth collecting. One day, for instance, a man brought in a batch of 300, the highest being for 5s., and the whole lot producing from £60 to £70. These 12,600 of course represent only the defaulting debtors, and what percentage they form of the whole number I cannot say. So far as concerns the representatives of the loan offices their business may be legitimate enough, but their appearance is very much against them; the possibility of their dealing leniently with an unfortunate debtor, or even refraining from entangling him still deeper, seems very remote.<sup>1</sup> Any more disgusting sight than some unclean, vulture-like old Jew "kissing the book," and gabbling through an inaudible form of words which is

<sup>1</sup> I quote an account cut from a daily paper after writing the above:—"In the Lord Mayor's Court yesterday, a money-lender, named Palmer, summoned a number of working-men, whose wages ranged from £1 to £2 per week, to show cause why they should not be ordered to pay different sums for which judgment had been previously recovered. One man, named Moltini, said he was security for another defendant, named Lyons, who borrowed £2 from the plaintiff, and had repaid about £1:10s., and yet they were each summoned for sums of about £8. Lyons corroborated the statement. After hearing further evidence the Assistant Judge (Mr. Roxburgh) said that in June 1893, the two defendants received 35s. from the plaintiff, and gave a promissory note for £2. Since that time £1:4:10 had been repaid out of the 35s. In respect of the balance of the debt judgment was signed against one of the defendants for £6:14s., and £1:5:8 costs, and against the other defendant for £6:4:8 debt, and £1:9:8 costs. In July 1894 the plaintiff's solicitor applied for payment of £3:1:4, but instead of signing judgment for that amount at that time, he waited until further costs had been incurred. To mark his sense of the way in which these poor men had been treated, he himself should make an order in each case for the payment of a penny a month. The decision was applauded by several persons in court, and will no doubt give joy to those who read this paragraph."

reduced to mere blasphemy in this connection, can hardly be conceived.

The private money-lender is more difficult to watch at work, but he is largely patronised, especially by the costermonger. The coster's business is mainly carried on on borrowed capital, yet he seldom appears in court; so much is this the case that for a coster to appear in court is a pretty sure sign that he is a bad lot. The reason is that this branch of credit has been made a special business of by men (or often women) well acquainted with the trade, and a man who is known to be trustworthy can always get his money without difficulty. I understand that there is an old woman who keeps a little stall in C—— Street, Islington, who makes "any amount of money" in this way; she knows all the costers and just whom she can trust, and lends only to them and to others introduced by them. The regular rate of interest is 1s. in the £, or 1d. in the 1s. for forty weeks; not much if one considers the inevitable risk in spite of personal knowledge. But as a matter of fact it works out at something much more like 400 per cent, for the coster seldom keeps the money for more than a few days. He borrows "a pound for a shilling" on Wednesday or Thursday, and pays it back on Saturday or Monday, borrowing afresh each week. The reason is said to be that he cannot trust himself not to spend it, if he keeps it for the intervening days when he is not at work, and if this is true to even a small extent, it throws a curious light on the type of character.

Perhaps the most interesting mode of borrowing is that carried on by the mutual loan societies (described also in Mr. Booth's book), which partake of the character of thrift. A club is formed in which members take shares, perhaps at 6d. a week up to a pound; and from the capital thus subscribed money is lent to members at the rate of 1s. in the £ for forty weeks. They are "sharing out" clubs, dividing quarterly or yearly, and paying interest on the shares out of the fines and interest paid on loans. The financial basis is not quite clear to me, but I know that considerable pressure is put upon members to borrow, whether they need the money or not, as otherwise the interest on sharing out could not be kept up; I am also assured that it pays a man better to borrow a pound than to withdraw a pound share, because he pays only one quarter's interest on his loan and receives three quarters' interest on his share. These societies are formed largely in connection with political and social clubs, and mainly with a view to paying the quarter's rent, but a man will often borrow for a Bank Holiday or a funeral; or, if he can think of nothing else, for clothing. (Strictly speaking this kind of borrowing can hardly be regarded as a form of indebtedness, and I only introduce it here as being a form of saving ingeniously contrived so as to include much of the injurious tendency of debt.)

The subject of pawning offers much food for reflection. It might be fairly argued that in pawning a man does not really get into debt at all, but merely exchanges his goods for a sum of money considerably

less than their real value. Technically I believe that the goods are so far gone out of his possession that he cannot recover damages in case of fire at a pawnbroker's shop. Nevertheless the money is generally regarded as borrowed, and the pledges as merely temporarily alienated; and for all practical purposes pledging is only a very expensive way of raising money. If indeed, as may no doubt happen, there is little or no prospect of redeeming, the man is merely selling his goods; living upon his capital instead of drawing upon his future income. But in the majority of cases there is every intention to redeem; and in East London it is a recognised function of clothing and furniture to serve at need as a machinery for raising money, *i.e.* for forestalling future earnings.

It not infrequently happens, however, that the goods are pledged without any definite intention of redeeming, and then of course the object of the pawner is to get as near full value as may be. Why not sell at once? it may be asked; but it is always more difficult to sell at a moment's notice unless at a ruinous sacrifice; moreover, when you have pawned you still have a marketable value in the tickets. There is a considerable traffic going on in pawn-tickets, and the effect of the double transaction is to occasion a sort of vague feeling that pawning is a profitable business in which you really can for once in a way both eat your cake and have it. The most striking instance of this which I have come across is that of a young fellow who somehow or other managed

to accumulate £50, he said by shoe-blackening and carrying luggage;<sup>1</sup> this he expended at sales, chiefly buying up such things as opera-glasses, telescopes, microscopic slides, and old books. Having thus invested his capital, his next proceeding was to begin to pawn, and to buy new articles with the money so obtained, always receiving, of course, less for an article than he originally gave for it. Finally he found his wealth reduced to a bundle of pawn-tickets representing some £20, and some 300 old books which not even a pawnbroker would take; when I came across him he was living on the tickets, selling them at a few pence each, but even then he was not convinced that his operations had been unsound in nature, but thought he had not been very judicious in the selection of the goods which he had bought.

This, of course, is an extreme case, but it shows how easily the essential loss involved in pledging becomes obscured, and explains the readiness of the people to have recourse to it whenever a little money would come in handy. The intention to redeem converts the transaction into a burden which is practically a debt, all the more dangerous because it tends to become periodical. Many an East End family is hampered all through a summer of good work by the struggle to gather round them again the home with which they parted last winter; only for it to be dissipated again as soon as work falls off. It is in cases like these that the pawn-

<sup>1</sup> I have since heard that he was afterwards convicted of passing false coins.

broker is generally regarded by benevolent outsiders as a guardian angel, ready to come to the rescue at a crisis. "What would the poor people have done if they could not have gone to the pawnbroker? they must have starved," we are often told. But experience or a little reflection shows us that every summer the poor people pay away in redeeming and interest enough to carry them through the winter without any assistance from the pawnbroker, and that but for the vicious habit of drawing upon the future they might with less hardship to themselves get through the winter and have the use of their furniture into the bargain. The pathetic absurdity of the situation finds its climax in the Monday to Saturday pawning, which has become so common and degrading a custom. It happens some Monday morning that the wife finds she has no money to pay the rent; it may be illness or a sudden call of some unavoidable kind; just as likely the rent has found its way to the public-house or music-hall. The remedy is close at hand. The Sunday clothes of the family are called into requisition, made up into a bundle and carried over to the pawnbroker; and the rent is paid. All goes smoothly until Saturday comes round, but then even the most easy-going sons and daughters will insist on having their Sunday finery back, and the rent must go this week in redeeming. On Monday of course the clothes go back, and it becomes a fixed habit, not altogether inconvenient, as there is little room for storing clothes in London homes,

and special accommodation will be supplied for the best dress by paying a halfpenny extra to the pawnbroker. Thus it comes to pass that on Monday morning the way to the pawnbroker's shop will be thronged with women, eager to leave their bundles and get home before the rent collector comes. On the guardian-angel theory this throng should mean a sudden outbreak of distress; really it is only an indication of the habit of mind which will go on shirking the burden and pushing it off indefinitely into the future for ever, rather than face it boldly and pinch for one week until the arrears are made up.

When we come to the credit which takes the form of not-paying, the varieties are of course co-extensive with the purchases made by the debtor; but certain of them are more general and therefore more important than the others. First among them is the general shop, and other tradespeople to a smaller extent. The general shop covers all the necessary expenditure of bad times from coals to candles, with the exception indeed of butcher's meat, and it offers substitutes for that in the form of bacon and eggs. It is therefore at the general shop that the debt accumulates, and the owner of the shop practically supports many of his customers for considerable periods of the year. This is why it is no kindness to leave sums of money to faithful servants; if it is enough they will take a public-house, more often it only runs to a general shop; whichever it is, a few months generally suffices to

divest them of every penny, and turn them out probably in debt. It takes some one born to the business, knowing whom to trust and prepared to follow up defaulters, to carry on a general shop in East London; given the necessary character they may do well; for by giving credit judiciously they will be able to hold their own against the larger shops and stores which do business on a cash basis, and to which the man who trusts in the future knows he cannot turn in bad times.

Next in importance to the general shop is the landlord, and large is the extent to which he is drawn upon for free lodging. Apart from the regular "besters," who will pay perhaps one month's rent in six, there are many who habitually let the rent run in bad times, and pay it up gradually as things improve. It is comparatively seldom, however, that they get it all paid before the next bad time, and in this way there comes to be a sort of "rest" which gets wiped out by a removal, but accumulates if the family stays on until it reaches pounds. After some time has elapsed they cease to regard this in the light of a debt, on the ground that "the landlord isn't likely to trouble about that"; whether their liability really lapses I don't know. (It is worth noticing in this connection that a "good-principled man" means a man who pays his rent regularly; it is in the eyes of the East Londoner a virtue sufficiently exceptional to stamp the whole character.)

When board and lodging can both be charged

upon the future a man's position is assured; but there are ways of dealing with less urgent needs which are quite as prevalent. He need not wait for his furniture until he has money to pay for it; the hire system will advance it to him, at a terrible cost it is true, but then that cost is charged upon the future. Articles concerning the purchase of which he would think twice had he to pay the money down, find their way into his home and cost as much to keep as an additional member of the family. The women revel in the possibilities of sewing-machines and mangles, which are to be had literally for the asking, but which in the majority of cases barely pay their own hire, and generally find their way back to the shop before they have done more than divert a little custom from some neighbour more in earnest. "Light come light go"; these hired goods have none of the steadying effect of genuine possessions; and their temporary owners are like spoiled children with too many toys, always wanting something else. The drain upon the weekly income soon comes to be intolerable, and the forfeiture of past payments preferable to the continued strain. To furnish on the hire system is perhaps as unsatisfactory a way of housekeeping as can be devised; even the furnished lodging has more of reality about it.

A still more insidious exponent of credit is the tallyman, who finds an occasion for exploiting the future of his victims in every conceivable article, both of necessity and luxury. Of course his success

depends upon the skill with which he can magnify the delights of immediate acquisition, and minimise the pains of future payment; it has very little to do with the real value of the article, which is often discarded or stale long before the payments are completed. All the genuine delight of purchase is in this way spoiled, and it becomes a mere burden, rashly undertaken and evaded as often as possible.

Occasionally the evil tends to remedy itself in curious ways when it has been carried to excess in some definite direction. I have already noted the mutual loan societies, which had their origin in the necessity of paying rent, and my attention has been called to a similar organisation in connection with funerals. Somewhat to my surprise I found that ten or twenty years ago the extravagance in this direction was even worse than it is now. Undertakers were much more ready then to give credit for "high class funerals," and people entirely without means would indulge in mutes, footmen, feathers, and pall—"the whole show"—and incur debts of £25 or more which they were years in getting rid of. Unless, indeed, they repudiated it altogether; and this happened to such a large extent that undertakers have become a cautious race. The extreme of credit now is a good funeral for £8 or £10, of which £5 must be paid down. Moreover, burial clubs have been instituted; the undertaker collects payments, and for about a shilling a month undertakes (giving a new meaning to his name) to bury any member of a family who dies within the year.

At the end of the year the balance is divided out, and in this way, by paying 12s. a year, you may if you are lucky have three or four funerals as well as a dividend of 6s. or 7s.

But even this gambling sort of thrift makes slow progress amongst a people so tempted on every hand to forestall their means. A man learns to consider it a little thing to be in debt for rent and food, and almost meritorious to possess furniture and clothing for which he has not yet paid; the consequence is that in one alone of the ten county courts of London, 12,600 were sued for debt last year; in other words, about every third or fourth family was insolvent; not merely living on their future, but having pawned that future so deeply that they could no longer get credit for it even in East London, the very paradise of indebtedness.

Taking it then that the prevalence of indebtedness amongst the working-classes in London is established, I want to consider briefly its bearings as a moral and an economic phenomenon. Is it sufficiently analogous to the prevalence of credit in the commercial world, to be a source of congratulation to the community? Does it, in other words, enable the working-class to carry on operations with a freer hand, and thus help it to increase its wealth and raise its standard of living? The primitive agriculturist learns by hard experience that last year's harvest is the only legitimate source of food; have we, in our more complex society, really got beyond that elementary truth? It is possible

to argue that in a community with so large a surplus available for luxury it is legitimate, and even desirable, to divert some of that surplus into a more productive course by advancing it to the labourer in the shape of food, clothing, and furniture. It might be even urged that although the labourer did not repay, the wealth of the community would be well spent in increasing the comfort of its working-class.

I suppose the ultimate criterion between good and bad credit is whether it directs capital into more or less productive channels. When the borrower is able to make use of his loan in such a way as to replace it with due profit at the end of his operations, then the transaction is justified. But in what sense is this true of the great mass of indebtedness of which we have been speaking?

Take rent as a typical instance. The indebted class *never* repays the loan (if loan we are to consider it) in full; much less is there any profit reaped except in so far as it profits by not-paying. Of course in the long run the deficit is made up to the landlord, who is no more of a philanthropist in his business than is the pawnbroker; he covers his risk by charging high rents all round, and thus it comes to pass that those who pay are just those who *don't* have credit, and therefore benefit nothing.

In the case of the general shops it is the same with a difference. Here, again, high prices cover some of the risk, but customers may choose between them and cash shops. It is the general shops them-

selves which suffer most in the long run, and taking into consideration the enormous number of small failures in that trade, I seriously doubt whether on the whole it is a remunerative one.

With regard again to the more direct forms of credit, we cannot argue that men only borrow because it profits them, and that therefore the very existence of credit is its justification. The men of whom I write are so far removed from the economic man that his characteristics are almost unknown to them. The economic man borrows with an eye to future profit; *our* man borrows for present convenience, and shuts his eyes to future loss. For there can be little doubt that if he pays he loses tremendously by the transaction, even from a money point of view. The hirer of a sewing-machine pays £8 for a machine which is said to cost £1 15s. to put together, and which can certainly be bought for £4 or £5 cash. The price covers the risk no doubt, but the hirer has her risk too, and is very liable to lose it altogether if she delays in her instalments. The whole hire system involves a similar loss to those who pay, while to the thousands who are tempted to pledge their future for things which they don't want, there is nothing but loss from beginning to end.

To borrowers who do not pay, or do not pay in full, the system is of course less of a financial loss; and here the point of view comes in which suggests that it may be no harm for a rich community to divert some of its wealth to meet the needs of its working-class. Some such suggestion was made, I

believe, with respect to the Scotch crofters, who were reported by the Royal Commission to be a fine race, but economically incapable of supporting themselves ; it might of course be that their qualities are so valuable as to make it worth while for the community to subsidise them permanently. Apart from the fact that the "wealth" which goes to maintain the East London debtor is not diverted from luxuries, but from the necessities of people little, if any, better off than himself, we must still ask ourselves seriously whether the qualities of this class really are such that the community should desire to perpetuate them. And even if it has desirable qualities to begin with, how long will they hold out against the degrading effect of chronic indebtedness ?

Let us look at this moral effect a little closer. Under the best of circumstances a man who is in debt is only half a man ; his future is not his own. But the man who has to submit to weekly dunning from professional debt-collectors, whose clothing is for five days out of seven in the pawnshop, whose household goods may at any moment be confiscated, and whose landlord is always meditating the advisability of evicting him, has sold himself into a slavery from which there is no escape but flight. He has literally no alternative but indifference or despair, and it is these qualities which chiefly characterise the class. Thrift is made an impossibility, for apart from the facilities for satisfying all desires without previous effort, how can you save with your creditors on the watch for every penny ? Many a shilling is

recklessly wasted because if not spent it will only go to the debt-collector; and it does not take long for the energies of the debtor to be diverted from the effort to repay to the effort to evade his creditor. I have known a woman move herself and family and belongings five times in order to avoid the payment of 1s. a week for a sewing-machine; as soon as she is tracked she makes another flitting, and will continue to do so until the creditor abandons the pursuit.

There is something also almost incompatible with self-respect in the scenes into which people are brought by their indebtedness. Go into the pawnshop and watch the man unroll the bundles as they are brought in, chaffing the women on the quality of their clothing, and holding some well-worn garment up to ridicule; see him take the wedding-ring from some poor woman, try it on the counter and sniff contemptuously that "there ain't much gold in that." Or go into the county court, where the very air seems tainted with degradation, and look at the faces of the throng of debtors lounging about till their turn comes. Some are anxious and troubled, the majority indifferent or contemptuous; there is no more sense of responsibility about any of them than there is about the out-patients in a hospital waiting-room. They happen to have got into debt as they might happen to catch a cold, and they have come there for treatment. It is a miserable scene, and almost enough in itself to condemn the whole system. And the worst of it is that if, like the Roman Emperor, we could cancel all the bonds, and dismiss the throng of men and women,

the majority of them would only use their solvency to get into debt again. Indebtedness is not an incident with them ; it is their plan of life.

Would the working-class on the whole benefit if an Act were passed making small debts irrecoverable at law ? This was the question which I had in my mind when I first began to consider the matter ; but I am not prepared to answer it decisively. The arguments against it are obvious, and it has been strongly urged upon me that the poor would suffer greatly in bad times by the inevitable withdrawal of credit by the general shops, and the inability to borrow a few pounds in emergencies. But there are two forms of credit which would remain practically unaffected by such an Act, and which involve, to my thinking, less harm than any of the others. The first of these I have not yet mentioned, though it is practised to a considerable extent ; it takes the shape of an advance of wages from the employer on special occasions of misfortune. There is no fear of such indebtedness becoming chronic, or of its being incurred for trivial reasons ; the loan is repaid automatically by deduction from future wages, and in full, but does not involve any burden of interest or fines. Moreover, it is made on the strength of a personal relationship, and brings with it no degrading associations.

The second kind of credit is similar in that the loan is made on the strength of personal knowledge and confidence, and does not rely upon legal proceedings for recovery. The most prevalent form of

this in London is that practised by the costermongers ; and in smaller places we find the general shops acting on what is practically the same basis. They rely, that is, on personal knowledge of their customers and their circumstances, and not at all upon legal remedy. The chief hindrance to this personal knowledge in London is the mobility of its inhabitants, and this would decrease enormously with the decrease of credit.

But the effects of legislation are difficult to foresee ; I am told that a great encouragement to bad debts has been given by the Married Women's Property Act, which has opened up new possibilities of evading liabilities. It is conceivable that a check to small debts would only conduce to larger ones ; and in any case such an Act could do nothing to remedy the evils of the pawnshop. My only conclusion is, therefore, that the amount and facility of credit (or as I should prefer to call it—indebtedness) among the working-classes is an almost unmixed evil.

## VIII

### MARRIAGE IN EAST LONDON <sup>1</sup>

OPPOSITE my study window stands the parish church, and the shady path leading from the gates up to the church door is strewn as white as if snow had fallen with rice, which will lie there until a shower of rain has softened it sufficiently to make an acceptable meal for the sparrows. It is Bank Holiday, the fashionable wedding-day in our part of the world, and large numbers of lads and lasses have celebrated it in the most approved way by getting married. All the morning there has been a noisy crowd round the church gates, and a row of the shabbiest vehicles and most broken-down horses in London has stood waiting to carry off the wedding parties to the railway station or to the nearest public-house. The path down from the church doors is a fairly long one, and affords ample opportunity for the boisterous merry-making which is universal on these occasions, and which often degenerates into something very like a free fight—though generally of a good-humoured nature. Some twenty or thirty couples have chosen this way of spending their holiday, and it is interest-

<sup>1</sup> From the *Contemporary Review*.

ing, if somewhat sad, to see their first start into the new life which awaits them. The majority have chartered an old cab; sometimes they rise to two or three, while sometimes two or three couples crowd into one. Five shillings a cab, to hold any number, is the standard charge for a wedding; and a "walking wedding" is the exception. Into these vehicles they ascend with what dignity they can preserve amongst the mingled chaff and admiration of the ragged spectators, and it is significant of future relations that the brides generally sit with their backs to the horses, while the bridegrooms light their pipes as they drive away. If it is a walking wedding, the party separates into two groups: the men, including the bridegroom, lounge off smoking and shouting, followed by the group of excited, chattering women. In this way they will spend the day, "sampling" the public-houses and making merry among their friends, until any lingering traces of the sobering effects of the morning ceremony have been well washed away. One such party I have watched followed up and down the streets by a practical joker with a hand-bell, who was greatly appreciated by the corner-men and street arabs. The toilets are wonderful to behold. They range through all varieties, from the orthodox white veil and flowing train to the glowing greens and purples of the coster-girl, whose wedding dress and hat will make patches of dirty brightness up and down the slums for years to come. The men are hardly less wonderful in the varieties of their ready-made or second-hand suits;

and figures which are passable enough as they stand behind their barrows, collarless and in shirt-sleeves, become deplorable spectacles of self-conscious awkwardness when attired for the first time in a complete suit, and adorned with a floral button-hole.

One wonders, watching them, at the light-hearted way in which they take this step. For the girls especially it means burdens which seem almost too heavy to be borne—of care and sickness and poverty, of hopeless squalor or unceasing toil, leading to premature old age or death. By the time they are twenty-five all the elasticity and vigour of youth are crushed out of them, and those who maintain their self-respect have nothing to look forward to but drudgery. These early marriages are the curse of the poor, yet the causes which lead to them are often almost inconceivably slight—a fit of pique, a taunt from some companion, the desire for a lark, or a bet; frequently there is no more substantial foundation than this in their choice of a life-companion, and the consequences cannot fail.

Among the more thoughtful, and more carefully brought up, there is, of course, a sort of courtship; but it is quaintly different from that which takes place in the higher ranks of society. From the first glimmerings of inclination there is no secret about it; Jack and Jane are “going together”; and when this going together passes into a formal engagement it is difficult to say—generally, I think, not until the day is fixed. It is a preliminary probation, rather than an engagement, and the experiment can be given up without much blame attaching to either side.

“ You wouldn’t have us take the first that comes ? ” a girl will say ; “ and how can we know whether we like them unless we go with them ? ” How, indeed ! in the crowded homes of the poor there is little room for quiet social intercourse, and parents have no time, if they had the inclination, to superintend the matrimonial ventures of their daughters. So acquaintance begins in the course of work or at some festivity, and ripens on trips to Kew Gardens and Hampstead Heath, is fostered by treatings to the theatre or music-hall, and culminates when Jack gets a rise in wages and Jane has saved up enough for a wedding dress and her share of the furniture.

Such a pair will, perhaps, have as good a chance of happiness as any ; they have learned to know each other under the ordinary routine of workaday life, and it is not left to marriage to divulge the failings of temper and character on either side. From a worldly point of view their position will not seem much to boast of to young people who regard money in the bank and a fixed income as indispensable conditions of life. Capital they have none, beyond what they may possess of skill and strength. Any little savings will be invested in the home, which—like Traddles—they mostly pick up bit by bit ; beginning even before they have turned their attention towards any particular mate. The girl, if she is of the better sort, will probably have managed to get a sewing-machine on the hire system, and this will go a long way towards furnishing the single room in which they start life together. During the first year, while the wife is still earning, many little articles of luxury

will be added, which will gradually disappear as the family increases and troubles accumulate. Have you never wondered, on looking in at the pawnbroker's windows, where all the gaudy little overmantels, and elaborate tea-services, and numberless plated spoons and forks come from? They are the harvest of the first "bad times" after marriage. It is not quite such a tragedy as it appears, though sad enough; "selling the home" is with East Londoners a recognised method of raising money, and many articles are avowedly bought with a view to being handy for the pawnbroker. It is a part of their principle of life, the subordination of future needs to present fancies, and they argue that it is better to enjoy luxuries while they can than to have money lying idle in the savings-bank.

Were it not for this false economy of borrowing from the future, which vitiates all poorer London (and makes co-operative stores an impossibility) young people of this class might find it no bad venture to throw in their lots together, and trust to their own right hands to pull them through life. But at a little lower level we find courage degenerating into foolhardiness, and self-confidence into a childish inability to foresee even the inevitable claims of the future. What is to be said for instances like the following, which are to be numbered, not by tens or hundreds, but by thousands?

A. B. is aged twenty-one, and has a wife and three children to support; he does it by turning a piano-organ to the accompaniment of a tin whistle. His story is that he was put to work at fourteen, got tired of it, ran away to sea and got tired of that; he came

home, and at sixteen married a girl of fifteen, and was obliged to do whatever he could to keep her. He is a well-made, active, rather intelligent young fellow, capable of doing better things by nature, but hopelessly dragged down by the responsibilities he has so recklessly assumed.

C. D. is of another sort; dull mentally and feeble physically, he has never supported even himself for a whole year, but has always been kept by his widowed mother through the winter. Last year he married a girl of eighteen, rather pretty and as helpless as a baby. He explains that he thought that two could get along as well as one, and "perhaps something might turn up." Something has turned up, and there are now three to keep; the mother declines the addition to her already heavy burden, and the Workhouse looms large before them.

Couples such as these will not even wait to get a decent home together. An old bedstead and bedding, two rickety chairs and a table to match, a strip of greasy carpet, and two or three cracked cups and saucers—these will be collected from sympathising neighbours, or picked up for a few halfpence from the costermongers' stalls, and will satisfy the highest expectations of the young people. There are thousands of such homes which have not cost 10s. to get together, and would not realise 5s. if sold, and these afford all of decency and comfort at which their owners aim.

Another, and no less fatal, kind of recklessness is illustrated by the following case:—E. F., a young man already advanced in consumption, marries a crippled girl, incapable of doing anything beyond a little needlework. He had a little business, and was

doing fairly well, but shortly after marriage was told that his only chance of life depended upon his passing the next winter in a milder climate. He sold the business, and handed over the greater part of the proceeds to his wife for the support of herself and the child during his absence; but she, resenting the thought of being left, invested the whole amount next day in a "melodeon" (from what I can gather, a large and expensive kind of musical box), and defied him to go and leave her destitute. He did not go, and from that time forward they sank lower and lower, picking up a living in the streets, buying old clothes and selling them again, and supported largely by charity, until he died and left her with two children to bring up as best she may.

What can be expected of lives in which the responsibilities are met in this spirit? You will find the results most manifest in the lower class Board Schools. The troops of ragged, dirty, stunted little urchins, neglected, and crippled in mind and body, that you will see there, are the offspring of these reckless marriages. Follow them home, and you will see the ruined lives of their parents; the mothers are either worn-out drudges before they have reached middle-age, or have developed into the careless slatterns who live on the doorstep gossiping with like-minded neighbours; the fathers, with all self-respect crushed out of them, are reduced to picking up odd jobs at the street-corner, and live more in the public-house than in their wretched homes. When we think, further, what the children brought up in such surroundings must

become, this question of improvident marriage shows itself as one of the most serious of modern social life.

Much of the evil is due also to false ideas about life which are not peculiar to the people of whom we are speaking. It is not only in the lower classes that girls are allowed to think, and even made to feel, that a woman's life has no legitimate interests outside those of marriage, and that, therefore, to lose an opportunity of getting married may be to miss all of good which life has to offer. Nor are those who should be the teachers of the young on such important matters wholly without blame; their doctrine that to discourage early marriage is to encourage immorality is a gross injustice to the great majority of the poor—perhaps, if they did but know it, the greatest of which they have as a class to complain at the present day. Evil enough there is, as all know who have much to do with the poor; but those amongst whom these marriages take place are just those who still have a respect for such obligations as they have been taught to recognise, and they are far more likely to sink to a lower level in consequence of their imprudence than they would be in consequence of judicious teaching and warning. As it is, they are acting up to the highest standard which has been set before them, and we have no right to assume that if they are shown one still higher they will not aim at that also. To realise that the people have a capacity for rising as well as falling, is the next step towards the Social Utopia in which no one will enter upon the responsibilities of marriage without a fair prospect of being able to bring up a family in decency and comfort.

## IX

### THE CHILDREN OF WORKING LONDON

ONE of the most serious social problems of the day is that presented by the rapid increase of large towns, more especially of London; and there is a tendency to regard this increase as wholly undesirable, and to some extent unnatural. When we are told that the population of London increases every year by 50,000, or in more picturesque and sensational language, that a fair-sized town is added annually to the metropolis, a lively imagination conjures up the picture of an army of able-bodied men and women trooping up from the country-side or from abroad, to compete with the unfortunate Londoner. We are a little apt, I think, to lose sight of the fact that by far the greater part of this annual increase consists of little Londoners who have at least as good a right as their parents to their heritage—such as it is—of bricks and mortar, and whose so-called “competition for labour” cannot but be regarded as natural and desirable. Dr. Longstaff, in his *Studies in Statistics*, estimates the extent to which Greater London grows on the one hand by “natural increase,” on the other by the “balance of migration,” and the ratio is as  $7\frac{1}{2}$

to 4,—that is to say, nearly two-thirds of the annual increase consists of London-born children. This being so, it is evident that only a comparatively small part of the problem is touched by any considerations as to the restriction of immigration from the country. A far more serious question presents itself in the infantine army, which is advancing upon us in what remains of this century,<sup>1</sup> and in the physical and mental condition of its members. We are told, for instance, that new hospitals will be needed for at least 6000, many of whom will be permanently crippled; institutions for nearly 1000 blind and deaf and dumb; prisons for 7000 criminals; and workhouses for 48,000 paupers; while of those who remain to take the field many will be feeble-minded and most feeble-bodied.

From considerations such as these the question which forces itself perhaps most frequently upon those who live in working London is this: Is it possible for children to grow up healthy and strong—mentally and physically—in large towns, or is it as inevitable as it is said to be that the race degenerates with town life until the third generation dies out from mere want of vitality? It is with this question before us that I propose to examine some of the conditions of child-life as they actually exist, and to consider how far they admit of actual improvement.

The most obvious and easily grasped of these conditions is, of course, school; but important as its influence is, this must still remain a mere incident in life as compared with the home. The child learns his

<sup>1</sup> First published in 1895.

manners and refinements at school; his habits and character are those of his home.

Home-life in working London is difficult to see. Sometimes one almost doubts whether there is anything beyond the busy passing up and down the streets, the hasty meal snatched between intervals of school or work, and for the mother the weary alternation between wash-tub and scrubbing-brush. But this is the impression of the outsider who confines his investigations to the main thoroughfares, or makes official visits during the business hours of the business day. One way for such a one to get a glimpse of the real life behind is by a study of back-gardens, such as are fortunately still to be found in many parts of London. Here human nature displays itself naturally and off its guard. Although the gardens (yards would be a better name) are necessarily surrounded by houses, each with its six or eight windows pointed directly upon them, yet there is a sort of tacit understanding by virtue of which family life goes on as freely and easily as in the most perfect seclusion. There is not necessarily any ignoring of what takes place, but it is understood that you are beyond the sphere of criticism, and may plant sunflowers, and shoot sparrows, and practise boxing on a Sunday without any one having the right to "pass remarks."

I am fortunate in commanding the survey of some five or six of these gardens—sooty, dingy strips they are, but capable of affording an immense variety of interest to the owners and their neighbours. In four of these there are families of children who lend them-

selves fairly well as specimens of different types. No 1 is the highest in the scale; it consists of four or five little boys, so like each other that the number is uncertain; they are as sturdy, well-cared-for little fellows as one would wish to see. The father is a policeman, with an interest in animal, as well as human nature, and his strip of garden is quite full of natural history. Every spring a brood of young ducklings appears, and as they gradually leave the scene they are replaced by pigeons; about a third of the ground is devoted to a permanent staff of cocks and hens, just beyond the reach of a dog whose chain allows him to command another considerable portion of the estate. I believe, but am not sure, that the lean-to at the end contains rabbits or guinea-pigs or some such small deer, and the daily process of tending and feeding this little kingdom is gone through with the greatest regularity and care by father and sons in company. Covered up in quaint little blouses which are discarded outside the front door, these little fellows have all the appearance, and many of the interests of country children, and in watching their merry natural life one feels encouraged to hope that in judicious hands many of the evils of the town may be averted.

Family No. 2 consists entirely of girls, aged from four to fourteen; it is distinctly lower in the scale of comfort than No. 1, although the mothers are on speaking terms and confide the histories of their children's accidents and ailments over the low dividing wall. There is a want of the phlegmatic

calm which distinguishes the policeman (I believe he is a Scotchman), and gives a tone of well-being to his family; the mother is worn and anxious-looking, the father is said to be going up in the world, but he drinks heavily, and since falling off the top of an omnibus, is wont to come home in a hansom. Discipline is enforced by loud commands and hasty slaps; the children are oftener in the streets than are their little neighbours; and the eldest girl has already caught something of the noisy laugh and reckless romping ways which are so characteristic of London girls. But there is still much that is natural and healthy about the life of this family; they have proper children's games in their garden, dolls' tea-parties, shops, and all the wholesome make-believe of child-life, and last autumn, after the delicate one had been ill, the whole batch was seen crowding into a cab on their way to a fortnight at the seaside.

No. 3 represents the pitiful class of invalid children. Until a few months ago she was the brightest little mite in London, brimful of life and merriment and spirits. Such children, when well cared for, seem to concentrate into their few short years of health the energy and vivacity of a lifetime. They are prematurely quick-witted, inexhaustible in spirits, with the keenest interest in all that goes on around them, and, until stricken down by illness, the light and life of the home. But they are children of the third generation their parents die young of consumption, and if they do not succumb to the ailments incident to childhood, they emerge from them crippled and maimed for life.

No. 3 has been brought up on exclusive principles ; a little guarded intercourse is permitted with the girls of No. 2, but with family No. 4 she is not allowed to "associate" at all, and if found exchanging childish confidences on the subject of cats or dolls over the wall, is hustled away to the seclusion of the back-kitchen. For the children of No. 4 are very low down in the scale ; they are not householders, but occupy a back attic, and it is only on sufferance that the little brother and sister are allowed in the garden at all. To them it is a place of punishment rather than of recreation ; they are banished thither, or into the street, whenever washing-day or other family catastrophes render their presence in the little room undesirable. They are ugly, half-starved, cross little things, whose only idea of play is to drop something over the wall for the sake of having it handed back, unaccompanied by a blow or a harsh word. Their future is easily read ; in a few years time the girl's poor, plain little face will be hidden under the big hat and drooping feathers of the factory hand, and the boy will be running wild in the streets, qualifying for reformatory or prison. And yet their life might be almost as good as that of No. 1 ; they live in exactly the same surroundings, and might go to the same school ; it is only a wholesome home atmosphere which is wanting.

It was first suggested to me by watching family No. 1 that one of the greatest drawbacks of a town education is its remoteness from nature. I am not referring now so much to the truism that it is desir-

able for children to have plenty of fresh air and country food, as to the effect upon mental and moral development of being born and bred in a town. Perhaps we can hardly realise what a narrowness of view this means for our little Londoners. For them the normal condition of a plant is to be in a pot, of a bird to be in a cage, of any animal but a horse or dog to be hanging up an ugly corpse in a butcher's shop. And it is not only that in this way they see Nature as something poor and ugly; they cannot see it in any other aspect than as subservient to human wants. There is no possibility of that disinterested outlook upon the world which is the root of all higher life. The country boy goes bird's-nesting, and catches animals, and turns all things to his own profit and amusement; but not even his egotism can fail to see that Nature has a meaning which is quite indifferent to his interests, and so presently he develops into the artist or man of science. If the town boy has any liking for live things he haunts the bird-fanciers' shops, and all which that leads to is pigeon-shooting and rat-catching.

Disinterested interest—that must be the keynote of all healthy life, and it is so difficult to get for children in a town life, where everything they see is framed and fashioned unmistakably for man alone. In the country human nature sinks to its proper insignificance, and preserves its true proportions; in the town its importance is exaggerated out of all proportion, and it becomes the grotesque and even hideous caricature which seems to develop inevitably under

the influences of town life, and which is rarely found in the country.

This, then, should be one of the points to aim at in the education of town children; to get them back to a proper reverence for Nature—reverence for the lower as well as for the higher forms of life, for degradation of the former is always followed by degradation of the latter. Much can be done in this way by means of books, museums, and public gardens; but all these are tainted by the same leaven of artificiality, and subordination to the little uses of mankind. Perhaps the biggest step in the right direction has been taken by the Children's Country Holiday Fund, and if it would last just long enough to establish a habit, and then die quietly out before it has established a claim, it might figure in social history as the initiator of a great social reformation.

Where there is a true home life this difficulty may be to a large extent got over, and a good home influence may partly compensate for the moral training which only country life can fully give. How far the London school life works in the right direction it is difficult to say; for the lowest class of children its value is quite inestimable; but this value consists less in the actual information imparted than in the discipline and order which is enforced. But when the children are of a better class, getting their moral education at home, and looking to school for their mental development, the question takes a rather different shape. If one could look upon the code as final, and upon education as a given quantity

accurately contained within its limits, then our Board Schools would be almost perfect in this way. Even as it is, the results which they achieve are really wonderful, and justify the expectation of great things when the material upon which we have to work is better understood. Take, for instance, the vexed question of technical training. There is in our school-children an immense amount of aptitude simply running to waste for want of proper development. There are children of generations of woodcarvers, weavers, flower-makers, and engravers who have inherited a fineness of touch which none of the present training given in a Board School can improve. They are splendid material for real teaching, and only need to have their eyes opened to true art to turn out first-rate work; but then we must have artists, or at least some one who knows what art is, to teach them. It is the same with musical talent; here, again, the material is excellent; their voices are good, and they are far more apt to understand and learn than children of the same age and social rank in the country.

The point which I want to bring out about these better-class children—the children of the artisan—is, that so far as concerns them, we are reversing the process of using a razor to chop wood with; we are trying to fashion very delicate and valuable material with very clumsy tools, and there is a great future for the upper working classes when they have learned how to develop properly the intellectual capacities of their children.

How does it stand with these children as regards

their chances of health and physical development? They have many difficulties to contend with in a town. Much stress is often laid upon the dangers they are exposed to in coming into close contact with the lowest class of children in the schools. So far as they do actually come into contact with them, this is a serious matter, and makes one feel inclined to wonder at the almost complete extinction of private schools. But the explanation may be found in the natural classification which goes on amongst the schools of a neighbourhood, and which is perfectly well recognised by both teachers and parents. Of the three schools which I know best, and which lie almost within a stone's throw of each other, the first contains hardly any but picked children—the best of the artisan class; the second has children of a much rougher description, but still fairly respectable; while the third is called by its teachers the “sink of Hoxton.” The neighbourhood is to all intents and purposes the same, but the one which was built last, and with all the newest improvements, has got a good name. There are always far more applications than can be entertained. The teachers are able to choose, and they naturally select those who will keep up the good name of the school. In this way the risks to the better children are reduced to a minimum, and are perhaps hardly greater than those incurred by West-End children in passing through the streets.

A far more serious matter is the overcrowding which seems to be almost inevitable in a town life. In the daytime this is of comparatively small im-

portance, though even then the effect on character of never being alone is very bad ; but the miserably inadequate sleeping accommodation, which is quite invariable amongst working people in London, must be highly injurious to children. Four or five in a bed is a common distribution, and I have known them overflow into the box-mangle, which was considered by the mother to be quite sufficient for two. When we add to this that the same room is used by night and day without a thought of ventilation, we cannot doubt that the seeds of much and serious illness are to be found in this overcrowding of growing children. Nor is the question of ventilation quite such a simple one as it appears to the educationally inclined visitor, who demonstrates to the mother the ease of opening a window. Very often the houses are so constructed that what comes in at the window is worse than what goes out. Moreover, those who have lived in the poorer districts have learned that if they are going to keep their windows opened at night, they must be prepared for very unpleasant interruptions to their rest.

Another way in which this overcrowding acts is in the late hours which it encourages, if it does not actually cause them. Half, at least, of the children cannot go to bed until the sitting-room is done with ; they must keep their parents' hours, and few of them finish their day before ten or even eleven o'clock.

Then, again, the excitement of a town life tells very greatly upon children ; if you look closely you

will see that London children are always tired ; the dark rings under their eyes tell of the nervous strain which is breaking down their health, and their very restlessness is the restlessness of fatigue and nervous exhaustion. They begin to share the life of their parents so early that they often seem to have no real childhood. This is especially the case with the first children of a family. The working people of London are a pleasure-loving race, and in their youth, at any rate, their evening engagements are hardly fewer than those of the West End ; the young men and women meet at the theatre, the music-hall, often at private parties ; they become acquainted in the course of social life, and when they marry they keep up the same constant round of evening recreations. Then comes the time when the young wife has to choose between child and husband ; it is a moral dilemma which hardly occurs in higher ranks. To stay at home with the child is to lose one of her strongest holds upon her husband—is to cease to share his leisure with him ; to leave the child alone seems impossible. And yet it would probably be safer than the course almost invariably pursued—that of taking the child and exposing it to all the risks of sudden changes of temperature, of crowded rooms, and of the cold night air. “ Why do so many Shoreditch babies die of bronchitis ? ” I asked a shrewd woman. “ It’s going out at night in all weathers,” she said promptly ; “ then, when the parents get home, they are not going to take the trouble to light a fire at that time of night, and the baby is undressed in the cold and

put into cold night-clothes and a cold bed ; of course they die." Not long ago I counted between thirty and forty infants-in-arms at the Britannia Theatre, and there cannot have been fewer than a hundred present. The later ones fare better ; not only is it easier to leave two or three at home together, but with increasing years and responsibilities the appetite for pleasure-going diminishes ; the father's habits are settled for good or for bad, and the mother is more content to bide at home. On the other hand, with the increase of the family, there creeps in the system of sub-contracting, which is as liable to abuse in family life as in industry. The mother hands over the baby to the elder children, the elder children to the younger, until three-year-old is left tumbling about the streets in charge of one-year-old, and no one ever knows the narrow escapes and actual mishaps which they undergo.

Another great difficulty against which these children have to contend is their unsuitable diet. Here, again, their needs have to conform to the taste of the parents, and often with disastrous results. In a town, the wholesome, if monotonous, diet of the country is replaced by an immense variety of cheap and "tasty" food, and even the baby has a morsel of everything which is going. "It can eat anything," said a proud woman to me, exhibiting a flabby infant, and the "anything" probably included an assortment upon which most of us would hesitate to venture. The "drink question" also assumes, perhaps, its chief importance with reference to

children who drink tea almost as soon as milk, and acquire a taste for alcoholic liquors before they can speak plainly.

It is worth noticing that in poorer districts the dampness of dwelling-houses is emphasised by medical officers as a fertile cause of illness amongst children. Indeed, all the causes which tend to raise the death-rate in poorer London are far more fatal to children than to their elders. Taking the percentage of deaths under five years of age to total deaths in the same district, I find that in five of the worst districts it varies from 44 to 49 per cent, while over all London it is only 36. Camberwell is most instructive in showing how terribly child-life is a prey to circumstance. Taken as a whole district, the rate of deaths under five years is 44 per cent of the whole number; but it is divided into four subdistricts. In Dulwich the proportion is only 19 per cent, in Camberwell proper it is 36 per cent, in Peckham 40 per cent, and in St. George's 49 per cent.

Perhaps it is not too much to say that the number of those who succumb to these evils is of less importance than the condition of those who survive. All are subject to the same mischievous influences, and those who struggle through bear the marks for life, if not in actual disease, at any rate in impaired vitality. And yet the remedies are so simple; more stringent enforcement of existing sanitary regulations, stricter supervision against overcrowding, and, most important of all, better training of boys and girls for the responsibilities awaiting them: little more than this

is needed to make a healthy life for children as possible in poor London as in rich.

This brings me naturally to my third class of children—the invalids. These children, as I have said, are generally in the third generation of London life. But to say this alone is at once too much and too little; it implies a cumulative and inevitable evil in which I do not believe, and the fatalism of the observation seems to yield a little before analysis. Take the child I have already mentioned as No. 3; she is suffering from hip-disease, and will probably never get rid of the complaint in one form or another. A superficial inquiry seems to strengthen the theory of heredity; her father died of consumption, a large family on the mother's side have died of consumption, and the mother herself is delicate. But let us go a little deeper into the family history. On the father's side the grandfather is a native of Islington, a bootmaker by trade, a clever workman, kind-hearted, easy-going, and thriftless, with a wife of distinctly commoner nature. They have a large family of wild, reckless young people, all of them steady so far that, though extravagant, they do not run into excess, but spoiled on the one hand by the mother's quarrelsome temper, on the other by the father's carelessness. Their home is a scene of constant irritation and excitement; they most of them work at their father's trade, and arrange their life so as to work night and day for half the week and play the other half. One of the sisters died in a lunatic asylum, literally driven mad by the home quarrellings. The others are all

living and in good health except the father of No. 3, whose illness was caused by working in poisoned air, and was probably in no way inherited.

On the mother's side both grandparents were country people. The grandfather was hopelessly invalided while comparatively young, and the whole burden of a large little family fell upon his wife. She went out to work, leaving a tribe of babies in charge of the eldest boy, and the mother of No. 3 went to work at the age of twelve, and never ceased until she met her future husband at an evening party. Three years afterwards he broke down, and with two babies the wife had to turn to work again, taking the smallest one with her, to lie about on stone floors and be almost utterly neglected, because she feared to lose the work that was bread to all of them. The other child was adopted by the father's family, and is now as healthy as late hours and unwholesome diet will permit; but the other was tossed from pillar to post while the mother alternately worked and nursed her dying husband. It is, of course, perfectly natural that she should now be suffering from early neglect, but there is nothing in all this which is the inevitable result of town life. If the father's early life had been in better hands, if the sanitary inspector had done his duty by the shop in which he worked, if friends had come to the rescue of No. 3 as they did for her sister—so many "ifs" might have saved this child that it is impossible to regard its fate as inevitable.

I believe the same to be true of thousands of

the little invalids who are now looked upon as the necessary victims of town life. They owe their lot to nothing so impressive as an inherited doom, but to a very commonplace carelessness and stupid selfishness on the part of the family and community into which they are born.

One most difficult part of the problem remains. What is to become of the lowest class of children—the children who come of degraded homes and degraded parents—the children who herd together in schools of the worst fame, and streets of the worst reputation? The class is too large a one to be ignored, though it may easily be overlooked if you keep to the highways. Like rats and mice and blackbeetles these little outcasts shun the open ways, and have their own haunts where they are seldom trespassed upon by the outside world. The responsible members of the family, the fathers and grown-up sons, are generally on guard at the public-house at the corner, waiting patiently for an acquaintance to turn up and stand them a glass, or beguiling the hours with a stray number of *Tit Bits*. Down a side street and into a little court off it you will find the wives and families at home. It is a peculiarity of these places that the house doors always stand hospitably open, inviting attention to a confusion of chaotic dirt within, and letting out into the street an indescribable odour which at once betrays the class of inhabitant. Every doorway is occupied by a more or less sturdy woman who, with her sleeves rolled up ready for the work which she never does, is comfortably

nursing her red elbows until the costermonger, who is yelling at the top of the street, shall make his way down to her. Then she will buy from him some half-rotten fish or decayed fruit and vegetables at the price charged for wholesome food in the open road. Swarming up and down the doorsteps, or camping out in the roadway, are countless numbers of puny, dirty children—a striking contrast to the stout, red-faced women who look on. They live in the roadway; it is quite safe from accidents, for there is no traffic; nobody thinks of passing through, and few people beside the rent-collector have any business in the place itself; and wet or dry, hot or cold, the children swarm up and down, eat and drink, play and even sleep, from early morning to late at night. They can hardly be said to be clothed; they are tied up in old rags, and garments of the most incongruous description are hung on to them with the utmost disregard of the age or shape of the wearer. These are the children who are found in the lowest class school, and there they get the only training or education of any kind which they will ever have. They are always unwashed,—at home because washing does not come within the scope of family life; at school because the risk is too great until it is possible to have a separate apparatus for each child. They are generally sucking sweets of some description, and they are nearly always one behind with their meals. It is quite true that many of them come to school without having breakfasted, and this is because their parents interpret too literally the maxim of

“sufficient unto the day.” They empty their cupboard each day, and have to earn a breakfast before they can eat it ; and though the children are always late for school, the household is seldom sufficiently advanced in its operations to feed the children before turning them out. Moreover, experience has taught them that the child who goes fasting to school generally brings home at night a little ticket which enables his father to postpone the problem of next day a little longer.

I must repeat here that the actual instruction which it is possible to drill into these children is absolutely unimportant in comparison with the habits of order and obedience which they are learning. It is their one chance of civilisation. From the age of three to twelve or thirteen they are in good hands, and it is before and after this period that they stand most in need of help. The critical moment of their lives is when they leave school, and in saying this I refer especially to boys. They are then bright, quick, and fond of making themselves useful ; if they could be got straight to work we should find ourselves in twenty years’ time almost without a residuum. But their mothers like them at home to help with the children ; their fathers to have them at their heels ready to run errands. If they are put to work at once it is only to a little errand boy’s place, which they lose as soon as they begin to grow lanky. This is true, I am sorry to say, of even the better-class parents, and many a lad is spoiled for life in the interval between school and work. Six months of

the idle, undisciplined street life is more than enough to undo all previous training, and it is extraordinary how a course of lounging outside public-houses will change these lads. When they leave school they are bright and responsive; as cheeky as you like, but quite frankly so, and without any malice about them. They are ready to do anything, and full of pluck and vitality. But after a year's idleness you can do nothing with them; they will be sulkily stupid when you talk to them, and are as likely as not to throw stones as soon as your back is turned. Any excuse is good enough for refusing work, and the chances are all in favour of confirmed loafing. There is a grand opening for the enterprising school manager who will take one of these schools in hand, catch the boys as they leave, and use all his influence to persuade the parents to put them in a good way of work. It would not be a very difficult task, and the effects would be quite incalculable.

Are London children happy? I think there can be little doubt in answering in the affirmative. Some very fruitful sources of childish misery there are. Illness, of course, is one, and perhaps not less potent the chronic sickliness due to the continual consumption of bad sweets. Drunkenness is another, though this is by no means invariably combined with cruelty, or even unkindness, to children. Even when it is, the genuine slum child has many means of withdrawing himself from notice until the danger is over. On the other hand, the delights of the street are many and great; the daily path to school yields a suc-

cession of stolen joys which make it compare very favourably in point of true pleasure with the formal promenade of the little West-ender in fashionable clothes and clean hands. The interests of a wet day are even greater than when it is fine, and the stock plea that the children have got no boots seems to diminish in importance as one sees the deliberate way in which they wade up the gutter, and seek out every puddle to paddle in, utterly regardless of good boots, or bad boots, or no boots at all.

To children of fourteen and fifteen the streets have a perilous fascination in the evening. The glare of the gas-lamps, the busy thronging to and fro, the wild, free intercourse among acquaintances and strangers alike, are irresistible attractions to these excitable young creatures after the monotony of the day. I have seen a letter from a girl of this age describing the delights of the street dance and the meeting of friends, which, though perfectly simple in expression, was almost passionate in its intensity of feeling, and made me realise more than many failures the impossibility of getting these young girls out of London or into a quiet domestic life. If they are plain or awkward or low-spirited, or in any way unable to hold their own in the boisterous merry-making, you may succeed; or if you can get hold of them before they have fairly broken away from the restraints of school. But not unless. There is a passion for excitement in all of us which must be satisfied when once it has got the upper hand, and what do we offer these children for the pleasures

which we ask them to relinquish? Safety and restraint; and for the one they cannot realise the need, while the other they have learned to hate. We shall never succeed until we can provide some safety-valve through which they can expend the emotional energy which possesses them. I suppose many of us find this safety-valve ourselves in literature, and it is astonishing that so little has been done to place good literature within the reach of the poorest classes. Many of them read as it is, but for every one that reads now there should be a dozen. Moreover, the stuff they generally read is as injurious as the sweets they are always sucking. In one sense it is harmless enough; there is nothing in it which could be objected to by the most rigid censor of the press; but the sickly sentimentality, the false ideals, the untrue pictures of life which are provided for the poor are a disgrace to both the culture and the enterprise of England. Why do not our publishers cater better for the people than this? It is no answer to say that there is no demand for higher literature. There was no demand for Sapolio until it was properly advertised. There is a fortune waiting for some enterprising capitalist who will re-issue some of our best authors in really popular form; good print, but paper backs, a penny a volume, and advertised as thoroughly as the latest kind of beef-tea or blacking. Literature lends itself to advertisement better than any other kind of commodity; specimen pages well selected and breaking off at a critical moment, dropped down every area in London, with a direction

to the nearest news-shop, would sell off a first edition in an incredibly short time, and when once the appetite was awakened the work would go on of itself.

Now let me sum up briefly the directions which those reforms will take which will have most influence upon the welfare of London children.

1. Better sanitation and stricter regulations against overcrowding.

In a natural state of things the size of a town is settled, or at any rate limited, by its water supply. So many inhabitants will congregate together as can place themselves within convenient proximity to the river, and be supplied by it through all seasons. We have removed that limit by artificial water supplies, and we ought, in common sense, to safeguard ourselves against the results. To do so is no more to interfere with natural liberty than it is to poison the river and divert country lakes into the town as its substitute.

2. Conscientious discharge of duties by employers of labour and factory inspectors, such as will enable work to become once more what it naturally is—the chief source of health and enjoyment.
3. Recognition of the fact that the care of children is as much an art as is the care of animals or the making of chairs and tables, and proper instruction of girls in that art.

4. A more vigorous action of school managers in ensuring that the benefit derived from compulsory attendance at school is not immediately lost on leaving.
5. A supplementation of Board Schools by a system of paying schools, offering a higher and more elastic order of education, and adapted to the needs of the better-class artisan.
6. The placing of good literature within reach of the people.

The two last developments are sure to take place before long as purely commercial undertakings. For the others we must wait an awakening of public knowledge which may be slow to come.

## X

### OLD PENSIONERS

BENEATH the elm trees on a still autumn day the leaves fall round us on every side. So silent are they that the noise of our feet on the gravel hides the sound of their falling, but we stand still for a few moments, and watch and listen, and the air is full of a dry and gentle rustle as one by one they break the slender bond which attaches them to the tree, and flutter softly to the ground. We look up towards the blue sky, and see them, golden and brown, hovering about us like wavering butterflies, hesitating, turning, caught in some current of air, but always falling, falling, till the ground is strewn. A breath of air brings them down in showers, but it only hastens their end by a few moments; dry and withered, they have no longer any hold upon life, and must go.

In the great towns we have few of Nature's tender parables to remind us of our frailty, but there should need no parable where we may see the human tragedy so directly and overwhelmingly in the lives of our neighbours. They are falling all around us in their thousands every day, dropping silently away from

life; but so noiseless is their fall that it is lost in the sound of the daily life of the great city.

It has come in my way within the last few years to see and know many of these fading lives, and I love to let my thoughts linger upon them before they slip away entirely from our world. They are so gentle, so aloof, so quiet and aimless, that they tempt one aside for a time from the eager hurry of younger life into the autumn which awaits us all.

It is wonderful how completely lost a life may be in the wilderness of London. Four bare walls only a few feet asunder constitute the world for many of my friends. One of these, a tiny old woman, whose eighty years had worn her away to a mere shred, lived, when I first knew her, in a room proportionately small, and seldom ventured out except for a visit to the baker. For sixteen years her life had centred in the little garret, and by degrees, as one friend after another dropped away, as work had to be given up, and shopping became more and more impossible, all her interests shrank within the limits of that narrow space. And so little there to compensate for the loss of the human sympathy and intercourse which was once hers! A narrow bed, with scanty coverings, an old moth-eaten hair trunk, with all the hair worn off, a rickety chest of drawers—these constituted the whole of her worldly properties. It fell to my lot to have to go through the contents of the drawers later on, and a more mournful survey I have never made—not for what was there, but for what was not. One or two old rent-books, a few scraps of former

dresses, bits of string, and stray buttons—there was literally nothing else. The one treasure was hidden away under the bed in the old hair trunk, and that one treasure was an ancient white beaver hat. It had once belonged to a brother, and I doubt not had been clung to at first as a relic of past gentility, and had been found too old-fashioned to sell or to pawn when little by little all her other treasures had gradually been parted with to bring the daily bread. That daily bread is purchased at a terrible cost by the old people, and the hunger of to-day is often stayed by the sacrifice of many memories from the past. What they cling to longest are relics which speak of better days, which bear witness to a gentility now faded like themselves. My little friend would dwell proudly on the time, so many long years ago, when her father was a prosperous dyer in Clerkenwell, and she and her sister had been sent to a “very genteel” school: in evidence whereof she would point to two samplers upon the walls framed as pictures, and representing Bible stories; their once gaudy colours as dim and tarnished as the memories which clung so fondly round them.

The little woman had been reduced to a pitiful plight before help came, before, indeed, any one knew of her distress; she had starved herself to pay her rent, and for rent to be paid with any approach to regularity is in our parts an almost unfailing sign of prosperity. The baker’s wife told me how, one cold night, she had staggered into her shop so dazed and faint with hunger that she could not make her wants

known. The prompt administration of a glass of wine marked the occasion as a red-letter day which she never forgot, and from that time forward she had "as much bread as she could eat," free of cost. This farinaceous diet was relieved by an occasional cow-heel, bought cheap on Saturdays, which lasted "some days," and which had, we will hope, something of the strengthening effect of calf's-foot jelly.

But the rent had still to be faced, and by the persuasion of landlady and baker she was at last induced to apply to the Guardians. This was a trial to her. "I could not dress nicely to go up there," she lamented, "or they would think I was too well off. I may dress nicely when I come and see you, may I not?" Dressing nicely meant the donning of a clean apron and an old shawl.

We had hoped that brighter days were in store for her. Friends were found to proffer a more sufficient and less irksome aid than that of the Poor Law; the universal panacea of a "pension" was applied. Five and ninepence a week in hard cash became the income of this astonished recipient. "I can't understand why any one takes an interest in me," she reiterated over and over again. But the revulsion from poverty to wealth was too great; her poor little mind, starved and lonely through so many years, gave way under the burden of riches. She could not credit her own good fortune; the money, she said, was bad; she would not spend it, but hoarded it up like a starving miser; then she refused to take it at all, and finally she became imbecile, and had to be removed to the

infirmary. Not even a pension could compensate for the long years of loneliness and neglect, or take the place of the loving care which should surround old age, and without which it may be but cruel kindness to enable the fading life to linger on in its solitude.

So starved a life as this is rare, except in the case of unmarried women of the working class. After their first youth is past, they seem to lose the faculty of making friends, and their scanty education, combined with the drudgery they must go through to earn a living, cuts them off from other interests. Frugal, austere, and lonely, neither giving to nor asking of their fellowmen, they may be found in their solitary garrets throughout the length and breadth of London; they are the nuns of to-day, the great lay sisterhood of stunted lives. One of the saddest lives I ever came across, and I have known many sad ones, was that of an aged spinster who, at the age of seventy-three, was earning a very scanty living by embroidering wedding veils. She was the daughter of a "bootmaker and dancing-master," had gone on the stage at the early age of three, and had been at work ever since. At one time, when far advanced in years, she had temporarily given way to drink, because she used to come home at night too worn out with work to be able to light the fire and make a cup of tea. A kindly neighbour saved her from the fatal habit by the simple expedient of boiling her kettle for her, and since then her faltering steps have kept the strait path.

The men seldom retire so completely ; they have their books or their papers, their pipe or their pet animal, for, contrary to tradition as it may seem, it is more often the man than the woman who keeps a cat or canary. As a contrast to my little old maid I must introduce an old man whose life is still full of interests. He has been a cabinetmaker. Not one of the modern kind who devote their lives to turning out one particular kind of chair or washstand, and when that goes out of fashion can turn to nothing else ; but a man of ingenuity and resource. He could design as well as make, and for two years "lived by his pencil,"—that is, by illustrating catalogues. Then technical schools came in ; he found himself unable to compete with the work turned out by them, and took to his tools again. As usual with people who take a genuine interest in their work he had many other interests also. His youth was before the days of Board Schools and evening classes, but *Cassell's Popular Educator* was available, and from it he taught himself French, Italian, and Spanish, the elements of algebra and geometry, and a smattering of astronomy and anatomy. His knowledge had made him very humble. "We working-men shall never be properly educated," he once told me regretfully, "it's not so much want of time, but we have not the perseverance to master book-learning." Yet he can carry on a philosophical discussion with an intelligence and accuracy which would put to shame many University men. He is succumbing to gradual paralysis, and takes the keenest interest in watching

the progress of the disease from physiological and psychological points of view. But his wife will not let him indulge often in philosophical speculations. "It excites him to talk that stuff," she says; for alas! she does not sympathise in his tastes. He has a treasured library of dusty old books, which she makes him keep out of sight in an ancient chest. He showed me some of these one day: an early edition of Locke's *Essay*, printed in Holland, Silvio Pellico, Lewes's *History of Philosophy*, charts of the heavens and maps of the earth, books of voyages and travels, and Latin Satires—hardly a branch of literature which was not represented in this shabby library, picked up from the bookstalls.

Times were bad with him a few years ago. His children, between whom and himself there is the strongest attachment, have not done so well with their lives as he has; perhaps they lack his energy and resource. Be that how it may, the burden of keeping their parents in addition to their growing families became so great a strain upon their resources that, at the age of seventy-five, the old man put his pride in his pocket, tucked his wife under his arm, and marched up to the Relief Offices. His sacrifice, however, was not permitted. No sooner were his wants made known than friends and relations came forward, more than willing to help one whom all respected. He now lives in frugal comfort, secure from want, tended by his wife and children, and waiting for the end with quiet interest.

Dame schools seem to belong to so remote an age

that one hardly thinks to ask what has become of the dames ; but here and there we find them stranded, as completely out of touch with the world of Board Schools as if they had never taken a share in the art of pedagogy. One such I know, gentle and meekly repining she recalls the sixteen years during which she kept her little school as some of the happiest of her life. I can imagine her in her young widowhood (for her husband died four years after they were married) gathering the little ones about her, and teaching them with a mild incapability which was perhaps partly compensated for by the influence upon them of her patience and devotion. Then the school was "taken from her" (probably a Board School was opened near by, for which hers was not allowed as a substitute), and she still weeps a little when she speaks of her loss. Her own children died young, and when she turned for her living to the trade of bookfolding she was quite alone in the world. Nor was there much solace to be found in her work ; it is monotonous and badly paid. Moreover, the employers for whom she worked dealt only in bibles and prayer-books, and she thinks people must have got fully supplied with these, for of late years there have been sad "slack times," during which no work was to be had. "The only chance of better times," she says, "would be if the Queen were to die." Not that she is guilty of any disloyalty, or would wish any one to die, however much she might benefit by it ; but the fact remains, as a mere matter of business, that if the Queen *were* to die every one

*must* have new prayer-books. A new proof, if one were needed, of the inevitable links between high and low.

However, the old lady is happily past any direct dependence upon the fluctuations of trade. Her gentleness and religious devotion have won her many friends; these bestirred themselves about her a few years ago, and contributions from five or six sources were guided together to form a little rivulet of benevolence which will soften her way to the end. She is, however, too sincere to reap all the benefit from her piety, which a less scrupulous person might have derived. One Society to which she applied only grant their benefits after a searching examination into the religious experiences of their applicants. "They wanted me to say the exact date and hour at which I was converted," she moaned; "and perhaps it was very wicked, but I couldn't be sure." So she was ploughed in her examination, and was too simple-minded to find consolation in her moral superiority to her examiners.

Her most devoted friend, who has lived with her for many years, and supplies her with many little comforts, was a fellow-worker. They must have been drawn together by force of contrast, for the friend is as fat and hilarious as the old lady is lean and melancholy; yet she too has had her trials and disappointments. A few years ago she thought her fortune was made, for a brother-in-law, whose wife she had nursed through a long and trying illness, promised to provide for her lifetime. Unfortunately he deferred

making settlements, died suddenly, and left her with only disappointed hopes. She returned bravely to her work and to the friend who was to have shared her good fortune, and every day, before trudging away to her prayer-books, she cleans the one room and takes the old lady her cup of tea in bed. In return, she trudges home at night to find a cheerful room, and a tender, if not a cheerful, welcome.

Surely nowhere can such loving care be better bestowed than upon these lonely lives which have outlived their own natural ties. I often think that the tragedy of the stage, where all comes to an end in a climax of woe, has nothing in it half so tragic as this lingering on long after the climax of all joys and sorrows has been reached. One brave woman I know who has gone through sorrow which would infallibly have broken the heart of a heroine in a drama, but there is no such easy solution to the problems of real life. Her husband, also, died in the early years of their married life, leaving her with one small boy to bring up. On him she centred all her hopes, and resolved to "make a gentleman" of him. With indomitable perseverance and energy she saved money, opened a lodging-house in Devonshire, and actually succeeded in giving the boy a good education. He was placed in a solicitor's office, where his undoubted talent enabled him to make himself a good position. His mother's ambition seemed in a fair way to be realised, when bad companions and an unhappy marriage brought hopeless ruin upon her work. Devoted to the last, she gave up her house in

Devonshire to watch over her son in London, while he squandered away her savings and drank himself to death. What could she do with life after that? Yet life had to be maintained, and for some weeks she lived on the proceeds of a set of silver teaspoons—all that was left to remind her of the position she had so bravely earned for herself, and so vainly sacrificed. Then a friendly almshouse opened its doors to her, and there she makes her home, the recipient of an old-world charity, between her visits as an honoured guest to those who have known her past life.

Many more I know, each with his own story, his own memories to look back upon, his own silent hopes for the future, each waiting until the wind shall pass over him, and his place shall know him no more. Let us bear in mind that such as these can no longer make a new life for themselves in this world, and that our care should be to strengthen every tie, however slight, which still connects them with human sympathy, and to guard against the thought, however kindly meant, that five shillings a week can by itself bring comfort into desolate lives.

## XI

### THE MEANING AND METHODS OF TRUE CHARITY<sup>1</sup>

PERHAPS the lesson which of all others we are most slow to learn is, that in order to do well it is not enough to mean well. In childhood, it is true, we are always having forced upon our notice the inadequacy of good intentions, but as we grow older, and friends become less ready to point out our mistakes, the moral judgment becomes confused, and the discrepancy between well-wishing and right-doing is lost sight of. External criticism has been removed, and we are too apt to accept this as a proof that there is nothing left to criticise.

Nowhere is this discrepancy so grave as when we come to take up charitable work, to "do good," as it is so often miscalled. I suppose that nearly every one who is given to charity is moved by the desire to exercise some influence, to alter the existing state of affairs in some way; in other words, that his desire for good works does not proceed from a merely selfish desire to improve his own spiritual condition. But

<sup>1</sup> A paper read at the first meeting of the Charity Organisation Conferences, London, May 1893.

it is comparatively seldom that we find any one who can give an account of the good he wishes to do, and can show in what way he proposes to bring it about. We are generally content to work in the dark, and accept the results—if there be any—as a series of surprises. In this sphere of conduct, and in this alone, good intentions are thought to be all-sufficient, and we sow wheat and tares indiscriminately in the faith that an approving Providence will make them all come up wheat.

What I want to do in this paper is to bring out the difference between the charity which only means well—in other words, the charity which means nothing because it knows nothing—and the charity which does well. And first of all I will guard against a misunderstanding. We talk a great deal in our London society about “adequate relief”; it is one of the catch phrases we are always falling into, and I think it is apt to give rise to the impression that all which charity needs to improve it is that there should be more of it. And so the tendency is for the 6d. ticket to give way to the 2s. 6d. dole, and the 2s. 6d. dole to the 10s. allowance, and we fail to see that in this way we are merely exaggerating the evils we deprecate. This desire for adequate relief found its fullest expressions in the Poor Law before its reform in 1834, and there are not wanting signs in London of a repetition of all the mistakes of that Poor Law under the guise of voluntary charity.

What we mean by thorough charity is not merely

this idea of giving enough, important as that is. We mean charity that is *thoroughly thought out*; we want people to work with their eyes open, to know, so far as it is given to men to know, what the results of their action will be; to deliberately set before them an ideal towards which they will work, and to the realising of which they will bring all the knowledge which it is in their power to accumulate. We want them to recognise that if they assume the heavy responsibility of intentionally influencing men's lives they must form some idea of what their influence is going to be; and then they will neglect nothing which will throw light upon their work, no details will be too trivial for their notice, no study too arduous for their zeal. Especially must they guard against letting themselves be misled into underestimating the importance of their influence. I doubt whether it is so much modesty as the liking for irresponsibility which leads us so often to think, or say, that what we can do is so little, that even if it is not useful it cannot do any harm. The real truth is, that we cannot escape this responsibility of influence even if we would; and when we come to do charitable work, of whatever kind it may be, we are deliberately assuming it, and are, therefore, bound to prepare ourselves for it.

Now this thoroughness of knowledge at which we aim will take two directions. It will involve, first, a careful study of the characters and circumstances of the individual men and women with whom we come in contact in the first instance; and it will involve,

further, a full acquaintance with the wider social conditions and tendencies within the limits of which we work, and without knowledge of which our efforts are likely to be self-destructive.

Consider for a moment the position of any man or woman in this strange world, and see how inextricably it is involved with a host of facts which are none the less potent for good or for evil because we do not recognise their existence. Human beings cannot be treated as simple units, as if they were all of one kind, and entirely independent of each other. In the first place, there is the man himself and his character; to handle these without a proper understanding is like experimenting with chemicals of which we do not know the properties—the results are more likely to be disastrous than beneficial. Perhaps it is because we have so habituated ourselves to regarding character from the point of view of merit only, that we rarely attempt to approach it as impartial students of cause and effect.

Then the man, with his character such as his temperament and surroundings have made it, can only act within the limits of the community of which he is a fraction. His every movement is influenced by relations of innumerable kinds. He is the member of a family, of a church, of a trade; his life is regulated consciously or unconsciously by the laws of his country, and his industrial position rises or falls with that of others all over the civilised world. He is as powerless to resist all these influ-

ences as a drop of water in the sea is to resist the tide, and if we are to help him to maintain his manhood and integrity, it must be by working with, and not against, the great forces which are moulding his life. Man's victories over the natural world have consisted solely in the study and utilisation of natural forces, and if we are to achieve similar victories in the moral world, it must be through a similar study and utilisation of the great moral and social forces already existing.

Here, then, are a few of the questions which we may ask ourselves when we are undertaking a fresh problem in charity. What do we know of this man's character? How has he behaved in the past, and how is he likely to behave in the future? What do we know of his family? Will they be a help or a hindrance to the work we have in hand? What is the influence brought to bear upon him by the church of which he is a member, and can we enlist that influence on our side? How do matters stand with that branch of industry to which he belongs? How about the laws which govern him? Are they such as will counteract our efforts, or may we rely upon them to strengthen us? Unless we prepare ourselves to answer questions such as these we shall act blindly and at random, and by the time we have answered all of them, we shall find ourselves in possession of a considerable amount of very useful and interesting information. Then for the first time we shall be in a position to handle our "case" skilfully, and with hope of good results; for it is

at one or another of these points that we must approach our work, and when we have mastered the problem in the manner indicated, the solution will not be slow to present itself. Of course it may prove that this solution does not lie within our reach, and that we must be content with a wise inaction. But the main difficulty is to get understanding; when we have reached that, sympathy and experience will generally suggest the next step. One thing is certain, that in the light of our knowledge we shall lose all confidence in the adequacy of doles and tickets to stem the tide which is overwhelming our protégé, and we shall cease to believe in the possibility of one remedy for all troubles. Further, the greater interest which we shall gain in our work will enlarge our sympathies in two ways. On the one hand, we shall no longer be content to pass hurriedly on from one "case" to another, dropping a trifle with each; we shall stop to see the results of what we have done, and exhaust all plans until we either succeed or fail conscientiously in curing the particular evil before us. On the other hand, we shall not dare to help the individual at the expense of many; we shall see in many instances that good to one means evil to others, and shall refrain from action, with the melancholy resolve that if we cannot diminish distress we will at least do nothing to increase it.

Perhaps you will think all this rather far-fetched, and fail to see its application to the actual work you may have in hand. Let me, therefore, go a little

more into detail, and try to show how such thoughts bear upon particular problems of charity.

First of all, there is the difficult question of character. What we need here is sufficient knowledge of the man's character to show us how he will be likely to act under the new influence we wish to bring to bear upon him. This knowledge we may get in several ways; we may get it from his past history, we may get it from sympathy, and we may get it from self-knowledge. Human nature is apt to be pretty much the same wherever we find it; and many of our mistakes come from expecting heights and depths in the character of others of which we know ourselves to be quite incapable.

One great difficulty over which we stumble in entering upon the consideration of character is the problem of "deserving." Shall we help none but the deserving? and if so, which amongst us shall we elevate to the awful position of arbiter as to who is and who is not deserving? Shall we yield to the difficulty, and rain our gifts upon the just and the unjust alike? and if so, shall we not incur the reproach of encouraging evil and placing a stumbling-block in the way of good? A. T. is a printer's labourer who fell out of work through temporary loss of sight; a good workman, with a character for steadiness and sobriety, and work to go to when he can pay up his union fees. Meanwhile himself and his family are starving, and unable even to pay the rent. Surely a "deserving" case, and one in which 25s. cannot be misapplied. Suddenly it appears that he has already

borrowed money to pay the fees, but has used it to live upon. Our sympathies are transferred to the indignant neighbour who lent the money in the hope of a speedy return, and we agree with him that only a man of no principle will borrow money for one purpose and use it for another. "Undeserving" presents itself as an easy solution of the difficulty. But, after all, how many of us would have been more deserving under the circumstances? A landlord threatening ejectment, and children in want of food, are obstacles which will shut out from view a whole universe of moral and prudential considerations. Let us, therefore, leave the question of merit, pay the fees direct to the union secretary, and get a friendly visitor to endeavour to instil more principle before the next temptation. Here comes in the need of a term to substitute for "deserving," and all we can give is the barbarism "helpable." Is not that significant? All these centuries of charitable effort, and no word found to describe the limits between what we can and what we cannot do by means of charity. It is only within the last few years that we are beginning to recognise practically that money is not a remedy for all social evils, and are learning to discriminate between the poverty which is curable, because we can remove its cause, and the poverty which is incurable, because its causes are too deeply rooted for us to touch.

We will cease, therefore, to constitute ourselves arbiters of who is and who is not deserving of help. We will not use our charity as a reward of merit; if

we do, we shall only foster hypocrisy and deceit; but then neither will we scatter it broadcast over good and evil alike in the vain hope that some of it will do no harm. We will rather set ourselves patiently and laboriously to understand clearly the cause of the mischief we wish to cure, and we shall then find that the maxim "Give him another chance" is in many cases as inapplicable and unscientific as the formula "undeserving." One man I know whose life has been spoiled by this easy-going condonation of faults of character. He is a clever workman, and can command the highest wages when he chooses; but he is quarrelsome and lazy, and has thrown away place after place. For years he was always maintained during his periods of idleness by charitable almsgivers who were sorry for his family, and wanted to give him "another chance." Of course, the more chances were given the more were wanted, and now it has come to this, that his wife and daughters go out to work while he sits at home and minds the baby. A little wholesome starvation at the beginning of his career might have taught this man a lesson he would never have forgotten, and enabled him to preserve his manhood; but hunger is now accounted a greater evil than any loss of self-respect or moral degradation.

Next in importance to personal character comes the consideration of family relations. Until they sink to the very lowest, few people are cut quite adrift from their families, and very much of the success of our work must depend upon whether these are

able to lift up or are ready to pull down. In this branch of our studies we may find it necessary to master whole family histories which may sometimes be rather tedious; but it will seldom happen that they are not helpful. As an illustration I may quote the case of Mary E., a hopelessly crippled orphan, who was found living in one of the worst slums in London. The woman with whom she lived was an aunt, herself in a state of abject poverty, with a husband out of work, and children of her own to support. The devotion of this aunt to the poor cripple was quite touching; nothing should induce her to part with her dead sister's child, who had been cast adrift by rich relations on the father's side; they would starve together rather than separate. Neighbours and district visitors were lavish in encomiums and small gifts, and serious thoughts were entertained of raising a weekly allowance for the girl's keep. But with more knowledge the aspect of affairs changed. The woman's volubility and dirty home first aroused suspicions; a visit to the country town of H. discovered respectable tradespeople who had frequently sent money and clothing for their niece, but finding that it all went in drink had given up in despair. They were still willing to respond to any practical suggestion, and finally, by the help of a lady living near H., Mary has been boarded out with some tenants of hers, and is happy in a new life of health and quietness. Nearly the whole of the cost is borne by the relations at H., who take the kindest interest in her welfare. In this case, then, the charity needed

was little more than knowledge; money gifts only aggravated the girl's miseries by keeping her in wretched surroundings among wretched people. Knowledge of the true character and circumstances of the relations on both sides has succeeded in making her as happy and comfortable as it is possible for her to be.

The same instance will serve to illustrate the harm which is done by shallow charity. The London relations kept their hold on the girl merely for the sake of what they could get by her, and there are hundreds of unfortunate cripples being used in a similar manner to attract the shallow charity which flies about London.

Take next the influence of the church to which a man belongs, the religious influence by which he guides his life, and than which it may be that none is stronger for good. But it may be strong also for evil. Where the poor are taught that to trust in Providence obviates the necessity of self-reliance and exertion, it is in vain that you will try to raise them. There are religious institutions in the poorer districts of London, largely entrusted with charitable funds, which, by the irresponsible and ignorant use they make of them, have gathered about them whole colonies of thriftless, indolent loafers. For these the only hope of regeneration lies in the spur of hunger which devoted men and women are labouring night and day to remove. Nor is it only that the idle and dissipated are encouraged; men of a much higher stamp find their minds perplexed, and their sense of

right and wrong confused, by the narrow views of teachers who will not study the problems of the world in which they are placed. I can see now the puzzled countenance of an elderly man who was out of work because his trade had gone to Manchester, and to whom his employers offered a berth in that town. Duty was struggling against inclination; he liked London, he dreaded change; in his dilemma he consulted the Sisters who were in the habit of giving him advice and tickets. "Trust in Providence a little longer" was their dictum. He gratefully accepted the oracle which freed him of responsibility, and has quietly settled down into one of the many thousand Londoners who are maintained by charity. The perplexity was, perhaps, more on my side in an interview with another man who brought his Bible to me to prove that he was to take no thought for the morrow, and then proposed to hand over all responsibility for that morrow to me. Such men as these cannot be dealt with without taking into consideration the religious influences which form so large a part of their lives, and unless we can enlist those influences on our side we must fail of the result at which we aim.

"Out of work through no fault of his own." What a sense of hopelessness falls upon us as this plaint re-echoes in our ears, and we recall the weary number of times we have endeavoured to grapple with the misery it means. It seems such a stubborn, stupid, unanswerable fact this being out of work; we are as helpless as children in face of it, and none of our efforts, from free dinners and soup-kitchens to

Mansion House funds, seem to touch it. What does it all mean ?

Let us put aside the last part of the phrase, the "no fault of his own," and assume that the man neither drinks, steals, nor is wilfully idle. This will reduce the number of cases considerably, but it will not much diminish the hopelessness of those which remain. Many of them can be described in negative terms only ; they don't drink or steal, but then they don't do anything else either, and mere absence of vice is not enough to fit a man to play an active part in the world. Sheer incapacity can never be helped, and all we can do with it in our charitable work is to be very careful that we do not put a premium upon it. Sometimes, it is true, when the incapacity is accidental rather than inherent, it can be removed ; and there is perhaps no satisfaction like this of enabling a man to take up his position in the industrial ranks. But we must bear in mind that this is not work which can be achieved by means of a few casual tickets or dinners ; it often needs months of patient care, and a determination that if we are to fail it shall not be for want of either time or money. Your incapable person is like a London garden, it takes a most extravagant amount of attention to get absurdly small results, but we are very proud of what we do get. But in these cases as in others I would urge the importance of holding your hand unless you are prepared to work with a definite aim before you, and to leave no stone unturned in your effort to realise that aim. For remember that if you fail you

have done worse than nothing; you have added one more to the many temptations which beset us all to be incapable, you have put a premium upon incapacity.

The remainder of our "out-of-works" will be men who are at odds with their trade for some reason or other. It may be that the trade has left the country, or that it is dying out altogether; that new kinds of machinery have been introduced, or new regulations have been adopted with regard to labour. But whatever it is, *there is always some reason* why the man who knows his trade cannot get employment, and it is our duty, if we are to work with our eyes open, to know that reason. When we do know it, we shall very likely see that we can do nothing personally, but we shall probably see also that in refraining from action we are helping on a better time, and we shall in any case have the solace of understanding the course we choose.

Sometimes, indeed, a way shows itself out of the difficulty. While I was writing this a man came in to ask to be helped out to Canada. Why did he want to go? Had he friends there? No, he had no friends there, and knew nothing about it, but he was a sawyer, and work had been very scarce in London; he had been badly off all winter, and he had noticed *that the timber came ready sawn from Canada*, and thought he had better go out to the forests. Now I say that any one who tried to make London more comfortable for that man would be guilty not only of an economic blunder, but of a moral offence; stern

experience has opened his eyes and taught him the great lesson that labour, like everything else, must go to the place where it is wanted. But not one in a dozen of the men to whom we offer emigration will accept, because, as they say, there's always a chance in London of something turning up. In other words, there is always some bad Samaritan stepping forward to falsify the lesson which nature is trying to teach.

Nothing is more common in the east of London than to receive applications for help while work is slack, and the temptation is strong to tide a family over a difficult time by temporary help. But why is it slack? In nine cases out of ten you will find either that the "slackness" is quite normal, and such as more careful men have provided for; or, that the trade is decaying, and that it is hopeless to look for a revival. For instance, certain branches of vellum binding and gilding are trades which, owing partly to strikes and partly to change in fashion, have almost entirely left London, and are most unlikely to revive again. Most of the men employed in these trades recognise the fact, and are turning their hands to something else; others there are who have come to rely upon being "out of work through no fault of their own," and scrape together a miserable existence out of odd jobs and charitable relief committees. Here, again, I say, that when we relieve these men or their families in a way which merely helps them to keep on as they are, and does not help them to make a fresh start in another direction, we are guilty of a grave offence.

I can illustrate in another way the harm which may be done for lack of proper understanding of a trade. The furniture trade of London is centred in a comparatively small area in the north-east district; it was at one time extremely prosperous, but has latterly been declining owing to the number of small men who work on their own account and undersell the large firms. At first this looks satisfactory, as if the middle-man were being done away with, and the labourer taking his proper position; and if these men worked on a sound basis this might be the right view to take. Unfortunately only a very small percentage of them keep solvent for more than two or three years at the longest; oftener two or three months sees the end of their venture. They save a few pounds from their earnings as journeymen, they work at a loss in order to get rid of their goods in an overstocked market, they use up all their material, and must beg or borrow to replace it, and frequently they end by selling their goods at mere cost of material. A special class of middle-man has arisen to take advantage of these people, and it is they alone who benefit from the system. Now, this kind of trade is largely supported by charity, which likes to think that for a few pounds it can set a man on his feet; it does not stop to consider that by helping him to undersell the legitimate trade, it is also helping to throw hundreds of better men out of employment.

Of the importance of knowledge of the Poor Law, and proper co-operation with it, I need not speak here, as it is to be discussed at another meeting.

Other influences there are at work, and fresh lines of knowledge will open up before us as our experience grows, but those which I have mentioned are among the most important. It has been difficult in so short a space to explain clearly all which I have in my mind as to the importance of this thoroughness of knowledge, or to convince you, as I am myself convinced, that no really good work can be done without it. Is it too much to expect from the charitable worker? If it is, then let him frankly give it up, and betake himself to that dullest of occupations—minding his own business. But I do not believe it. People who will go through the dreary monotony of dole-giving or ticket-dispensing, on the vague chance of helping their weaker brethren, will welcome the prospect of an intelligent study such as I have indicated, and such as is carried on in at least one institution in London. The time will come when no town will be without its training college for social workers, and no parish without its reference library on the industrial questions which give rise to problems of poverty. Meanwhile it may be difficult to combine in one person all the kinds of knowledge and experience which are needed, but this is a difficulty which can always be got over by taking counsel together in our charities, and by making use of the wisdom of others to supplement our own shortcomings.

I like to picture humanity as a great army pressing on towards an invisible goal, and guided by a wisdom not its own. No power can stay its course nor alter its direction, and those who try to turn

aside on their own little paths of self-indulgence, or will not keep step with their comrades, or falter with failing strength, are cast down and trampled underfoot. It is with these that we have to deal in our charitable work, and what we must aim at is not to make their fall easy, but to raise them to their feet again, to turn their faces towards the light, to lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees. How can we do this unless we ourselves are working with open eyes, unless we understand their mistakes better than they do themselves, and can point out the path in which they have to tread?

## XII

### THE EDUCATION OF WOMEN

THERE are few subjects upon which so much has been said or written as this one of how women should be educated, and I suppose there is none upon which there has been greater diversity of opinion. The development of the question has been a remarkable one, and well deserving of much closer study than we can give to it here; for it consists in nothing less than the slow recognition by humanity that Reason is of the same nature in man as in woman. That the recognition has been slow is due no doubt to faults on both sides; or rather, for I wish to avoid the imputations of injustice or rivalry which are so apt to embitter discussions of this kind and render them unfruitful, it is due to shortcomings which could only be conquered by the general progress of human nature to a higher level. But that it is still incomplete seems to suggest that natural limitations have become hardened into unnatural prejudices, which call for special efforts to break them down.

The subject is especially interesting in its purely educational bearings, for the history of women's education gives us points of view which are hardly to

be got elsewhere. Looked at broadly the history of *man's* education is neither more nor less than the history of Reason, pushing forward to the best of its ability in whatever direction it can make headway; knowing little or nothing beforehand of what it will achieve, but recognising no closed doors in its explorations. To it obstacles exist only to be overcome, and from every victory it issues with redoubled strength and vigour. But when we turn to the education of women, as it has been for the most part carried on, we find something altogether different. Here the path has always been planned out beforehand; men have said: "This little sidewalk is suitable for you, here you will meet with no obstacles and need make no exertions; you may come a little way along this road which we have prepared for you, but you must not try that other, it is too steep." And so it has come about that the minds of women have generally been artificial productions, based upon preconceived ideas of what was suitable to women; they have never shared in the struggle forward, and thus have failed to attain to the firmness and vigour which are the rightful attributes of Reason. To be "strong-minded" has always been a reproach to women: I am not sure but what it is so still. And yet what quality is more essential to a human being than strength of mind, strength, that is, of Reason and of reasonable will?

So far, then, as regards women, we have a history, not so much of their education as of theories about their education; and it will help us to understand

the position if we look at a few typical instances of the way in which it has been thought of in the past. It would hardly be to my point to quote the oppression of women amongst savage tribes, nor their suppression amongst Eastern peoples; for where brute force or superstition is the ruling power we need not expect to find the claims of Reason recognised. But how was it in the most civilised state of ancient days, where the intellectual life reached its highest point and was held in most veneration? "Whatever their (*i.e.* women's) position may have been, they are, when we see them in the age of Pericles, surrounded by restrictions of the closest kind. They live in separate apartments, usually in the upper parts of the house. They very rarely went out of the house. If we look into the agora or the streets of Athens, we see very few women, if any; probably none of free citizen origin. No education seems to have been given them. It is possible that the wife of Sophocles or Phidias could neither read nor write. The intellectual life of Athens was not for them. The philosophical movements of the time did not touch them. The theatre was so intimately connected with religion that its doors could not be entirely closed against them, but they were only allowed to be present at the tragedies. The wives and mothers of the great men of Athens are, for the most part, names only, to which we can attach no character at all." And again, "Plato's statement that the highest intellect among women is only equal to that of a second-rate man, has made him seem to some a contemner of women.

But the really striking thing about his proposals, if viewed by the light of contemporary social conditions, is his demand for a fuller education, physical and mental, for women, his claim that women shall not be excluded from the life of the State."<sup>1</sup>

A passage has also been pointed out to me in which an Athenian gentleman describes his wife and her duties. He says: " 'What should she know when she came to me? She was only fourteen, and had always lived under the strictest supervision, that she might see and hear and ask questions as little as possible. All that I could expect was that she could return you a garment if you gave her the wool, and had seen how work is given out to the servants.' In this, which is plainly held up as an ideal union, the wife was to be house-mistress, and definitely to remain in charge 'at home,' while the man was 'abroad.' It appears that she could keep and read an inventory; but it is thought that the education of Athenian women did not include more reading and writing than this. The ordinary union at Athens involved the same ignorance and exclusion of the wife, often without the safeguard presented by active household occupation."<sup>2</sup>

This was what we may call the domestic ideal of women's education as conceived by the Greeks. I am far from saying that it is a low one, but the domestic ideal is by itself insufficient while women have minds which cannot be confined in narrow routines. In Greece of old, as in England at the

<sup>1</sup> G. Grant, *Greece in the Age of Pericles*, p. 229 seq.

<sup>2</sup> Companion to Plato's *Republic*, Bosanquet.

present day, energies which were refused their natural outlet turned to follies and mischief. "Plato," we are told, "would actually prohibit all private worship at altars and temples, because of the tendency of women and invalids to make and pay fanciful vows to gods and inferior spirits, filling all the houses and villages with altars and temples; whereas Plato says to found a temple or divine service is a serious thing, and requires a great mind. So Menander's *Misogynist* complains: 'The gods are especially a nuisance to us married men, for we have always to be keeping some festival. We have family prayers five times a day; seven maid-servants stood in a circle playing cymbals, while our ladies chanted'; and finally Plutarch's picture: 'It is false to say that idle people are cheerful, if so, women would be more cheerful than men, as they mostly stay at home; but as it is, "though the north wind may not touch the tender maid," yet vexation and distraction and ill-feeling, owing to jealousy and superstition and innumerable empty fancies, find their way into the boudoir.'"

To my mind there is something very naive in the way in which men will constantly point out the ill effects upon women of idleness and untrained faculties; they seldom recognise that the discomfort they experience from these ill effects is, after all, only the natural consequence of their own theories about women's education.

But the domestic ideal reaches a much higher level among the Hebrews, just because they allow a wider scope to the energies of the woman. Perhaps she is

a little too energetic to be comfortable, but it is a fine picture. "She seeketh wool and flax and worketh willingly with her hands. She is like the merchant's ships; she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. She considereth a field and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. She perceiveth that her merchandise is good; her candle goeth not out by night. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. She stretcheth out her hands to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy. She is not afraid of the snow for her household, for all her household are clothed with scarlet. She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple. . . . Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates."

In different forms and different degrees this ideal has held its own down to the present day. It is too true in its main outlines to ever fail of exercising a great influence, but by itself it is insufficient. I find an amusing counterpart to it written at the end of the last century, which represents very well the narrow range of interests and waste of time to which such an ideal may lead when it is not supplemented on the intellectual side. A father is writing about the education of his girls, and says that he resolved "to bestow that care on my daughters to which only sons are commonly thought entitled. But my wife's

notions of education differ widely from mine. She is an irreconcilable enemy to Idleness, and considers every state of life as Idleness in which the hands are not employed, or some art acquired, by which she thinks money may be got or saved. In pursuance of this principle, she calls up her daughters at a certain hour and appoints them a task of needlework to be performed before breakfast. They are confined in a garret, which has its window in the roof, both because work is best done at a skylight, and because children are apt to lose time by looking about them.

“They bring down their work to breakfast, and as they deserve are commended or reprovèd; they are then sent up with a new task till dinner. If no company is expected their mother sits with them the whole afternoon to direct their operations and to draw patterns, and is sometimes denied to her nearest relations when she is engaged in teaching them a new stitch.

“By this continual exercise of their diligence, she has obtained a very considerable number of laborious performances. We have twice as many fire-screens as chimneys, and three flourished quilts for every bed. Half the rooms are adorned with a kind of *sutile pictures* which imitate tapestry. But all this work is not set out to show; she has boxes filled with knit garters and braided shoes. She has twenty covers for side-saddles embroidered with silver flowers, and has curtains wrought with gold in various figures, which she resolves some time or other to hang up. All these she displays to her company whenever she

is elate with merit and eager for praise; and amidst the praises which herself and her friends bestow upon her merit, she never fails to turn to me, and ask what all these would cost if I had been to buy them. . . . In the meantime the girls grow up in total ignorance of everything past, present, and future.”<sup>1</sup>

Out of the insufficiency of the domestic ideal to afford interest for all the faculties and energies of women in modern times, we find another suggestion arising which is still very influential. It is the suggestion that perhaps after all it may be well to educate women just enough to keep them contented and out of mischief, enough even, it may be, to make them more interesting companions for men. This is what we may call, in its developed form, the accomplishment ideal. A writer in 1710 says, “I could name you twenty families, where all the girls hear of in their life is, that it is time to rise and to come to dinner, as if they were so insignificant as to be wholly provided for when they are fed and clothed. It is with great indignation that I see such crowds of the female world lost to human society, and condemned to a laziness, which makes life pass away with less relish than in the hardest labour. Palestris in her drawing-room is supported by spirits to keep off the return of spleen and melancholy before she can get over the half of the day for want of something to do, while the wench in the kitchen sings and scowers from morning to night.” He proposes as a remedy

<sup>1</sup> *The Idler*, vol. i.

that "those who are in the quality of gentlewomen, should propose to themselves some suitable method of passing away their time. This would furnish them with reflections and sentiments proper for the companions of reasonable men." As an aid to them he suggests "for the better improvement of the fair sex, a 'Female Library.' This collection of books shall consist of such authors as do not corrupt while they divert, but shall tend more immediately to improve them as they are women." "*They shall be such as shall not hurt a feature by the austerity of their reflections.*"<sup>1</sup> I like this last precaution; it reminds me of a lady I once knew who would not let her daughters learn Latin, lest it should make them hard-featured.

Three years later, a writer in the *Tatler* takes up the subject. "I have often wondered that learning is not thought a proper ingredient in the education of a woman of quality or fortune. Since they have the same improveable mind as the male part of the species, why should they not be cultivated by the same method? . . . Learning and knowledge are perfections in us, not as we are men, but as we are reasonable creatures, in which order of beings the female world is upon the same level with the male. We ought to consider in this particular not what is the sex, but what is the species to which they belong."

So far our writer's arguments are irresistible; but the conclusions he draws from them seem from our

<sup>1</sup> *Guardian*, vol. i.

later point of view miserably inadequate to his theme. He adduces an instance of what might be achieved by educated women in "an excellent lady," who "in the space of one summer furnished a gallery with chairs and couches of her own and her daughter's working; and at the same time heard all Dr. Tillotson's sermons twice over."

I quote these passages to show how slowly and through what curious and devious ways we have reached the idea that women should receive a disinterested and thorough education. Those who do not yet realise it should read Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, a vigorous protest against the artificiality of the education given to girls a century ago. She gives a vivid description of the softness and dissimulation which were feigned and cultivated as appropriate to the sex and likely to be pleasing to men. To have a small appetite, to be easily frightened and very ignorant, and to be well versed in the art of skilful flattery; this was the type of character aimed at. That there had been better notions which had been forgotten seems probable, and of course there were exceptions, but it is not until the beginning of the nineteenth century that we find much sign of improvement.

Then, indeed, women seem to have begun to read; partly, perhaps, because of the development of a literature of novels and easy poetry suitable to their undeveloped intellects. But if we may judge from the heroines of those novels, the object of their reading was mainly (as was suggested a hundred years

before) "to furnish them with reflections and sentiments, proper to the companions of reasonable men." All Miss Austen's heroines are duly furnished with sentiments and reflections, of which they make very skilful use in their converse with reasonable (and unreasonable) men. A starlight night or the death of a friend; a country walk or the loss of a lover; any occasion serves equally well for the utterance of elegantly-worded reflections on the beauties of nature or the vicissitudes of life. The art of quotation especially seems to have been prized before the days of birthday books and Shakespeare Calendars.

It is always with diffidence that one differs from the views of so great a teacher as Mr. Ruskin; but to my mind his really beautiful chapters on the education of women (*Sesame and Lilies*) are marred by these "accomplishment theories." "All such knowledge," he says, "should be given her as may enable her to understand, and even to aid, the work of men; and yet it should be given, not as knowledge—not as if it were or could be for her an object to know, but only to feel and to judge." . . . And again, "A woman in any rank of life ought to know whatever her husband is likely to know, but to know it in a different way. His command of it should be foundational and progressive; hers, general and accomplished for daily and helpful use. . . . Speaking broadly, a man ought to know any language or science he learns thoroughly—while a woman ought to know the same language, or science, only so far

as may enable her to sympathise in her husband's pleasures and in those of his best friends."

Apart from the difficulties of putting this theory into practice—for how is it possible for a girl to regulate her education by the requirements of a husband who is presumably not yet known? how is she to know just how much philosophy or science, just what language, will be pleasing to him and his best friends?—it seems to me radically false. Unless the object of learning is to know, and to know fundamentally and progressively, then learning becomes mere trifling and waste of power, it loses all dignity, and is degraded to the level of a pastime, or a task, as the case may be.

The opening sentence of the *Encyclopædia of Education* runs: "The ideal presented to a young girl is to be amiable, inoffensive, always ready to give pleasure, and to be pleased;" and no doubt this still represents the ordinary feeling. The implication of course is, that no good work for the community is expected from women in their capacity as rational beings; and it is only in the latter half of the century that there has been any marked advance from this position. Public opinion must have been changing for some time to make advance possible, and every one will be able to call to mind particular instances of well-educated women in past generations. But by real advance I mean something more than this; I mean the abandonment of all artificial theories as to there being some particular kind and degree of education which is appropriate to women merely as an

accomplishment, as making them more amusing and interesting to men. In other words, it is only in the second half of the nineteenth century that the way to real knowledge has been thrown open to women to follow as far as their power and inclinations may take them. That is what I take the higher education of women to mean ; simply the abandonment of any artificial standpoint. It carries with it no necessary implication of equality or rivalry with men, it urges upon none a task which may be unsuited to their powers or their duties ; but demands *that what knowledge women do have shall be true knowledge, and not mere accomplishment, and that the best shall be open to them so far as they are able to avail themselves of it.*

The first step towards a definite recognition of this policy was taken in 1865, when the local examinations, which were previously open to boys only, were thrown open to girls. This has led by beautifully logical steps to the growth of a better system of education, which, being “fundamental and progressive,” has carried women into the very centres of learning themselves ; and there they are now endeavouring to secure themselves against any reaction in favour of artificial theories.

The Report of the Royal Commission on Secondary Education tells us that : “ Since the Schools’ Enquiry Commission made their report in 1868, there has probably been more change in the condition of the Secondary Education of girls than in any other department of education. The report of that Com-

mission, the action of the Universities in regard to the higher education of women, and other causes, have produced an effect which is gradually pervading all classes of the community; and through this or other causes, the idea that a girl, like a boy, may be fitted by education to earn a livelihood, or, at any rate, to be a more useful member of society, has become more widely diffused. The supply of good schools for girls is now far larger than it was twenty-five years ago." During the same time the various colleges for women have been organised, and to a certain number of women at least the best education available is open.

What is it that we have gained, or hope to gain, from this advance? What are the advantages of the new over the old education? In the first place, there is a very solid gain in commercial value. That from the most purely economic point of view a "good education" is a good investment of capital let the hundreds of women testify who are earning an independent living by thorough and honest work, instead of being inefficient and underpaid nursery governesses.

But apart from the economic point of view, and even more important, we must estimate the effects on the character of what our ancestors were pleased to call the "female mind" itself. The power of working steadily with one object in view over a prolonged period of time, is one that is new to us as a class, and which cannot fail to make us more efficient and helpful whatever the course of life we may enter

upon. The analogous power of overcoming obstacles by persistent struggle, with its accompanying delight of stimulating progress, is a gain that is too great to be measured in money or even in words. And most important of all is the opening of the mind to the wider issues of life and thought. Even if it were true, as our opponents urge, that women can never do original work, it is no little thing to be able to escape from the harassment of petty vexations by sympathy with great interests, or to know how to order our own lives in harmony with the realities of progress instead of being blindly hustled into submission.

Nor to those who can see largely is there anything but gain in these qualities from the most domestic point of view. The education of the next generation is still, and always must be, largely in our hands; and the education of the boy and man can never undo the education of the child. If that is not "foundational and progressive" the superstructure will be unstable and stunted. The organisation of the household again requires for its perfection the same powers. Failure in this work, as in most, may generally be traced either to (1) attaching importance to the wrong things, or (2) inaccurate and careless habits; and only a mind that has large views and is well disciplined will avoid both these errors. So far from a good education unfitting women for domestic life, it *must*, if really good, improve whatever capacity they may already have for it.

But it is not wholly, or indeed to my mind mainly, for the sake of women who can go to school and

college, that this question is important. It is the community as a whole, and most of all the industrial section of the community, which will benefit by the change as it becomes more and more widespread.

Let me revert to the principle I have suggested ; the principle that what knowledge women receive shall be true knowledge, and that the best shall be open to them in so far as they can avail themselves of it. How far is this principle applied, and how far is it capable of application among the industrial classes ? Just here and there no doubt, where the question is confused by no side issues, it is beginning to be recognised that women should be thoroughly trained in the best way for the work they will have to do. This is the case, for instance, with nursing ; here there is no question of rivalry with men to rouse hostility, and here the benefits to the community of really good work are immediately obvious. Here, therefore, the days of inefficiency are rapidly passing away ; Sarah Gamp is becoming an impossibility, and will soon be regarded as a fabulous monster, and every nurse is expected to be properly trained and qualified. But in by far the majority of cases girls still receive no training to speak of, before taking up the work by which they are to earn their living. If we watch the boys and girls as they pass out from the elementary schools, we see at once the contrast beginning that will mark their whole lives in future. Except in the lowest class, or in a family which is going down-hill, the boy is put to "learn his trade." Whatever it may be, he expects to serve his time as

a learner, and his parents are prepared to maintain him wholly or partially for a considerable time, while he acquires sufficient knowledge to carry him forward. With girls this is as a rule quite different. True, they are put to work at once, but some occupation is chosen in which the returns will be speedy, and that means that they will be small. Of course there are many exceptions, but in general it is regarded as unnecessary to secure a good industrial training for girls. Now, the "trades" which bring in the quickest returns are those requiring a merely mechanical and easily acquired dexterity, which practice may perfect, but which is useful only for the one purpose, calls for no exercise of the intellect, and is capable of no development. The result is inevitable: all purely mechanical work must sooner or later be taken over by machinery, and the unfortunate women can only hold their own against machinery by doing more and more work for less and less pay. In general terms the process is this; one of these undertrained girls is starting at box-making, cap-making, feather-curling, button-making, or any one of the hundred odd "trades" that are supported by women's labour. She thinks herself fairly well off at first with her six or seven shillings a week; she is living at home, the work is monotonous, indeed, but not exhausting, and the hours are moderate. She continues for some years, her fingers getting more dexterous with habit, but her brain is never exercised in any way, and brain and fingers both become so "set" that by middle-age she is incapable of doing or learning to

do any kind of new work. Then fashion changes, or machinery becomes imminent; more work must be done and less money can be earned; the poor body, enfeebled by insufficient nourishment, is called upon for greater and greater exertions, until, of course, it breaks down altogether. Then the employer, who has only been keeping her on at starvation wages, because the "poor thing had worked forty years for the firm, and could turn to nothing else," introduces a neat little machine which never gets tired, and if women are employed at all, it is to do the more rational work of supervision. That is the only cure for our "sweated" industries; women must be educated above the level where they need fear rivalry with machinery, they must be taught to use their intellects as well as their muscles. This is one reason why domestic service never falls quite so low as merely mechanical trades; however monotonous it may tend to grow, it always calls for some resource and adaptability, and therefore a domestic servant is apt to be at her best at an age when her sister who learned a "trade" is worn out as a machine, and half stupefied as a rational being.

Of course the arguments in favour of superficial training for girls are quite familiar to us all. They turn upon the question of marriage, and run into one of two forms, according as our opponents are economists or sentimentalists. Put briefly we may call them (1) the waste-of-time-and-money theory, and (2) the unfitting-for-domestic-life theory.

1. Why trouble ourselves to give a good industrial

training to girls who will in all probability marry? The answer is in the first place, that though most women marry, yet many do not, and we have no right to punish those who do not by condemning them to the life of slavery I have described. Moreover, *no* girl should be allowed to feel that marriage is her only resource against grinding poverty; no girl should be put to such work that she "would marry any one to get out of it." And again, it is constantly happening in the industrial world, that wives and widows *must* work. When the father deserts his family, or falls sick, or dies, the mother is even more imperatively called upon than the single woman to earn, and her position is indeed a cruel one when she comes to the labour market with nothing to offer but willing toil at the most unskilled work.

2. We have already dealt, to some extent, with the theory that good education unfits for a domestic life. We make the same reply with regard to the higher kinds of industrial training. If economy, resource, industry, method, and self-control are desirable qualities in a home, then the girls who have been well trained in any of the higher branches of industry will so far be better wives and mothers. But the old superstition that ignorance is the best marriage dower dies hard, and objections are even raised to the introduction of sufficient physiology into the curriculum of the Board School continuation classes, to enable girls to take an intelligent care of children. A little botany, I have heard it said, is "nicer" and more "suitable for girls."

But in arguing that all girls should be well trained, I am not arguing that under normal conditions married women *should* work. From my own experience amongst the poor, I can bear witness to all the evils which are attributed to it; the neglected houses and children, and uneconomical housekeeping due to the custom can hardly be too strongly portrayed. Fortunately it is a custom which is decreasing among the working-class. But what I maintain is, that all women should be in a position to earn a decent living for themselves and those dependent on them when occasion arises.

Finally, there is one difficulty running through the whole range of the question which must be faced. Does the better earning capacity of women injure the economic prospects of men? Is it really an alternative whether women should work or men? If it were so, I am inclined to think we should do better to submit, rather than to burden ourselves with the support of our male relations. But the question in the long run is absurd. It comes to asking whether there is only a limited amount of good work to be done in the world, so that more given to women means less for men.

I am well aware that cases can be pointed out where women seem to have ousted men from some particular shop or employment. It will generally be found that this is due to defective organisation on the part of the women, who do not stand out for the proper wage; and for this the men who exclude

them from their trade-unions have largely themselves to thank. But I take my stand on the facts adduced in Miss Collet's report on the Employment of Women and Girls (1894), which showed that where the employment of women is increasing it is not to the exclusion of the men, but merely to supplement them. "No fact comes out more clearly than that the occupations in which women and girls have been employed on work hitherto done by men and boys, are those in which the employment of the latter has increased at an abnormal rate."

But in industrial as in college life the importance of the issue does not lie only, or indeed mainly, in the commercial value of a good education. We must look for it also in the wider life, and the more dignified position which it alone can bestow. Bitterly as the women of the lowest classes suffer from their low wage-earning powers, they suffer still more hopelessly from the position of social inferiority which they occupy in the eyes of the men of their own households. It is this which imposes upon them a life-long submission to the tyranny of men and of circumstances; and from this there is no way of rescuing them, but by raising them to a higher level of intelligence.

To sum up: The education of women in the past has been guided by artificial standards. (1) The Feminine. (2) The Pleasing and Convenient to Men. The Feminine may be either a positive standard of foolishness, or a negative one of "good

enough for women"; while the "Pleasing to Men" varies with varieties of men.

In place of these standards we wish to substitute the idea that nothing is good enough but the best, and that this can only be obtained by a disinterested education.

And we want this idea to be applied to the whole community, in the interests of the whole community. One of the great arguments against a standing army is, that it lives upon society without producing anything towards its maintenance. We may with more safety begin our reforms by disbanding our standing army of incapable and idle women, and setting them all to useful work.

Moreover, we want this idea to prevail not only for the sake of the comparatively few women who can pass from school to college, but also, and still more ardently, for the sake of the great numbers who suffer economically and socially from their incapacity.

I have said that women are now endeavouring to secure themselves against any reaction towards artificial standards. To touch very lightly upon a controversial topic, I would suggest that the real strength of the movement of women for admission to the Universities does not lie in their claim to the commercial value of the degree. That, no doubt, is important; but far more important is the public and official recognition that the artificial standards are to be abandoned. That we are right in regarding this as our only safeguard is, I think,

shown by some of the suggestions of our opponents. A women's university, with a curriculum specially suited to women, and even the introduction of arts and accomplishments, are, I believe, among those suggestions; and, however mildly they are introduced at first, it is difficult to doubt that they would finally result in the rehabilitation of the old standards.

Our plea, after all, is only one which was made for us thousands of years ago:

“Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates.”

### XIII

#### THE INDUSTRIAL TRAINING OF WOMEN

I HAVE already spoken of the general arguments for giving to women a better industrial training than they get at present; but the importance of the matter seems to me so great that I propose now to press the question into further detail.

First, I will endeavour to make more clear the need there is for change by giving some sort of picture of the state of things as it is at present. For the purpose of this I shall use partly statistics taken from Giffen's Report on the Wages of the Manual Labour Classes, 1893; from the Report on the Employment of Women, Royal Commission on Labour, 1893; and from the Report on the Employment of Women and Girls, Board of Trade, 1894.

In the first Report is given a table of thirty-eight miscellaneous industries (p. 470), in which are employed 355,838 men, whose earnings vary from under 10s. to over £2. The average wage is 24s. 7d. per week.

On page 474 is given another table showing the earnings of 151,263 women, who are employed in twenty-three of the same industries. *Their* average

earnings are 12s. 8d. per week; little more than half as much as the men receive. Of these women 26 per cent earn less than 10s. a week; 50 per cent between 10s. and 15s.; 18·5 per cent between 15s. and 20s.; 5·4 between 20s. and 25s.; and only 0·1 per cent between 25s. and 30s.

Here then we find at the outset a striking difference between the wages of men and women *in the same industries*; due, partly no doubt to other causes, but in the main to lack of industrial training. The argument that it is physical strength which is deficient in women will always have some weight, but loses much of its importance when we remember that it is *skilled* work which commands the highest wages, not work requiring most strength.

The point here is not that women are paid less for doing the same work as men, though this also happens now and then, but that they are usually employed at those parts of the work which require less skill; which, generally speaking, means less training. That with better training they can earn more is sufficiently proved by the fact that out of the women in question, 198 actually did earn between 25s. and 30s a week.

These tables present the problem under the most favourable conditions. Can we regard it as in any way satisfactory, as a state of things in which we can acquiesce? We shall often be told that it is quite all right, that men have families to support, and therefore ought to be much better paid than women. There are many things which might be

said about this, amongst them that what we object to is not "more for men," but "so little for women." But for the present we must be content with pointing out the following facts.

Mr. Charles Booth tells us that in London alone 185,000 women are *heads of families*. Here then we may meet the enemy by borrowing his own argument and turning it against him. The need to support a family is sufficient reason for earning good wages; let us therefore act upon it and make our many thousands of women who are going to be heads of families *able* to earn good money. And because we shall never know which of all our women they will be, and because the necessity will be thrust upon them by dire misfortune, not assumed voluntarily and for their own satisfaction, this means that *all* women should be industrially trained. The majority of these "heads of families" will be widows, with families to maintain, and to them we must add the many families where the man is alive, and therefore returned as "head," but owing to physical or moral infirmity has to be maintained by the wife. In all these cases good wages are quite as necessary as they are to the man.

But to take an average of 12s. 8d. a week as representative of women's earnings would be to neglect altogether the darkest side of the picture, which we should have in our minds before we can appreciate the importance of the problem. There are many industries requiring a minimum of skill and training, involving great toil under miserable

conditions, and paid so badly that it is the rarest thing to find a man working at them at all. The Report of the Women's Industrial Council on Home Industries gives particulars of thirty-five of these. I will give the earnings in some of them.

*Brush-drawing.*—Earnings range from 8d. a day for eight hours' work, to 1s. 9d. for fifteen hours' work. Six shillings a week seems a fair average; or, measured in hours, 1d. to  $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. an hour. "It is practically an unskilled industry, in which the supply exceeds the demand to an almost unlimited extent."

*Match-box making.*—Rates of pay vary from  $1\frac{1}{4}$ d. to  $2\frac{3}{4}$ d. for a gross of match-boxes. The earnings work out at 1d. an hour or less; in one instance two women worked ten hours for 1s. 2d.; but from 11d. to 1s. a day for twelve hours is the general rate. Children frequently help; in one case a boy of four was found helping. The cost of materials is about 2d. in every 2s. 6d., besides a fire to dry the boxes. Nearly all the houses where this work is done are horribly dirty, and the smell of sour paste is revolting.

*Buttonholing.*—Halfpenny per dozen collars, three buttonholes in each collar; cost of thread,  $2\frac{1}{4}$ d. in every 2s. 6d. earned. For shirts with fourteen holes, 1d. each. Earnings, 11d. for eleven hours' work.

*Paper bags.*—Earnings average about 1s. 10d. a day for ten hours' work.

Pre-eminent amongst these home-industries for bad pay and bad conditions is fur-pulling. Of this I will quote the report in full:

“Fur-pulling may fairly claim to occupy one of the lowest places in the ranks of women’s labour. The picture of the women working is a haunting one; they are scantily clothed in rough, sacking-like dresses, open for the most part at the throat, and letting the flesh appear through various slits and holes. This garment is matted with fluff or down. The women work and eat and sleep in an atmosphere thick with impalpable hairs, and tainted with the sickly smell of the skins. Everything around them is coated with fur, and they themselves look scarcely more human than the animals beside them, from the thick deposit of fur which covers them from head to foot, and forces its way into the eyes and nose and lungs of the miserable workers. The rabbit-skins are given to the out-workers in ‘turns’ of sixty skins to be cleared, *i.e.* for the long, outside hair to be pulled off with the plucking-knife, and the fur reduced to the soft, silky down which grows close to the actual skin. For these turns they are paid from 9d. to 1s. 2d., according to the size and quality of the skins; ‘furriners,’ or Australian skins, fetching the highest price. A turn and a half of the small, or a turn of the large skins, is the amount usually done in a long day’s work, and the average daily earnings are 1s. 1d. From this a deduction has to be made for knife-sharpening and shields, about 4d. a week. Occasionally the pulled-out hair, which is returned to the factory to be sold as cheap bedding, is said to be deficient in weight, and the amount is deducted from the price paid. There is very little variation either

in earnings or conditions of life. The women suffer greatly from chronic asthma, brought on by the fur penetrating to the lungs, and by the acids with which the colonial skins are cleaned; and the rate of infant mortality in the homes of the pullers appears to be abnormally high."

Some of the industries in which much higher wages are paid than those I have quoted, are in reality even less desirable, owing to the fact that they are "season trades," *i.e.* that the women may be out of work many weeks in the year, and for many more working short hours and earning very little. For instance, Mr. Sherwell (*Life in West London*) writes: "An interesting clue to the seasonal fluctuations in the dressmaking and millinery trades is afforded by some returns (relating to twelve firms) published by the Board of Trade. From these it appears that the staff of workers is reduced by over 50 per cent in the slack seasons." Nearly all the lower branches of the clothing trade are subject to these fluctuations; and it is terrible to think of the straits to which the 50 per cent may be reduced during the "slack season." It is said that "in the West End of London at least, milliners, and dressmakers, and tailoresses are frequently driven upon the streets in the slack season, returning to their shops with the advent of the new season's trade." But the majority simply pass through an extremity of suffering and semi-starvation for themselves and their children, which may or may not be very slightly modified by relief from the Poor Law or from charity. And indeed it is no kindness

to give "relief" in these cases; to supplement insufficient wages has but one effect, to reduce them still lower, and all ineffectual charity to these women makes their lot still more hopeless. The one remedy is to enable them to earn better wages—wages sufficient to maintain them, and those dependent upon them, *all the year round*; and this can only be done by giving them a better industrial training.

One is liable to be met here by the argument that there is not enough well-paid work for every one to do, and that by increasing the number of workers we shall only be lowering wages and crowding out those already employed. If this were true we might well despair for our unfortunate women workers; fortunately it is only a revival in a new shape of an old heresy which has already been slain many times, the old wage-fund theory. The wage-fund theory assumed that there was only a certain limited fund in the country to be expended upon wages, and that if one set of workers succeeded in raising their wages they were, *ipso facto*, lowering the wages of others or their own at a future day. The new work-fund theory in the same way assumes that there is only a given amount of work to be done, and that if some people get more work there will be less for others. The untruth of the assumption seems so obvious as to hardly need refuting, but in order to make the case for our women workers as strong as possible, we may consider it briefly.

In the first place we may ask how, if this theory were true, can it happen that the work which only

employed ten millions of people in England a century ago, now employs over thirty millions? According to the theory, two-thirds of our population should be out of work? The answer is, of course, that the increase of population has in itself made more work to be done; every new worker who has come upon the scene has needed to be fed, clothed, and housed, and has therefore given employment to many of his fellow-workers.

But now suppose that most of these new-comers had been so poor that they could buy next to nothing. *Then*, of course, they would not have given employment to each other; people too poor, say, to buy shoes, make no work for the shoemaker, and a butcher would be always out of work amongst a people too poor to buy meat. But make the "poor" people capable of doing something useful, *i.e.* of earning money, then they will be able to buy shoes and butcher's meat, the shoemaker and butcher will prosper and begin to employ builders and upholsterers, and so on until the whole working community is busy. To say that there is no more work to be done, is really to say that everybody has got everything he wants, which never has been and never will be true. As we may all know from our own experience, man is a creature of progressive wants, *i.e.* when you have given him all he wants of one thing, forthwith he begins to want two more; and so the vista of "work" to be done in satisfying each other stretches out interminably before us.

Take the case of a man who has been out of work

for some months. We know how he will have had to restrict his expenditure, how he and his family have gone on short commons, how the girl who used to come and mind baby has been dismissed, and the washing is done at home, and shoes and clothing worn out instead of being replaced by new ones. Then when he gets to work again, and money begins to come in, all this is reversed. The washerwoman and baby-minder are reinstated, orders to butcher and provision-merchant are doubled, the tailor and shoemaker receive the stimulus of his custom, the whole industrial world shares in an infinitesimal degree in his renewed prosperity.

The same argument applies exactly to the working-women of whom I have been speaking. Almost without exception they are only half-fed and half-clothed, and if they were only earning enough, it is absolutely certain that they would double their demand for food and clothing to-morrow. Double it!—why they could easily treble or quadruple it, and not be over-fed or over-clad. Imagine the run upon the bootmakers if every ill-shod woman in England earned enough money next week to be able to buy a new pair of boots. The stores would be almost, if not quite exhausted, and all the bootmakers working full tide to replenish them.

The point is, that in putting these women in a position to satisfy their wants we should be practically creating a new market, and conferring quite as great a benefit upon trade as by keeping open the ports out in China, or subjugating some African tribe.

We are often enough exhorted to "encourage home industries," but how could we do this better than by opening up the new and probably insatiable market which would be afforded by a race of well-paid women with healthy appetites and a laudable love for nice clothing?

But, it is objected, look at any particular industry where both men and women are employed; take clerks, for instance. Is it not clear that if there were no women acting as clerks there would be so many more openings for men?

No; it is not clear. If we cut off the wage-earning power of these women clerks, we also cut off their demand for many of the articles they now use; that is, we shut off a market which men are employed in supplying. And inasmuch as all industries employ clerks directly or indirectly, it is quite certain that the closing down of any market will diminish the openings for clerks as for other workers.

The real sting of the position comes in when women "undersell" men. That is quite bad, and a real loss to the wage-earning class; probably to all classes. Let us consider why they do this.

In the first place, we must be quite sure that in any particular case they *are* underselling before we complain. By underselling we mean, strictly speaking, giving the same work, the same in quality and amount, for lower remuneration. To a considerable extent it will be found that where women are getting lower wages it is because they are *not* doing the same work, that in some way or another it is inferior to that

done by the men. This may be due either to want of strength or to want of skill, and we will presently consider how far these two defects may be remedied.

But when women really are doing the same work for less remuneration, it is due mainly to three causes.

1. Because there are as yet comparatively few occupations open to women.

2. Because women are slow to combine and support each other in the demand for higher wages.

3. Because of the popular opinion that women need less than men.

To a considerable extent men are themselves to blame for the fact that they are undersold by women. In the first place, they are partly responsible for the inefficiency of women. In proof of this consider the following extract from the Report on the Employment of Women, p. 93 :

“ Witness 91, a managing director of the Women’s Printing Society, said the great difficulty in their way had been the refusal of the printers to teach women any but the lowest branches of the work ; they would not teach them ‘ imposing.’ ”

“ Witness 97, an employer, said the women only did the more ordinary work ; they were not put on to the jobbing, which required a great many types, and they did not learn to ‘ impose.’ They carried their own galleys, but the men compositors lifted the ‘ formes ’ for them. It was difficult to get girls to go through a long apprenticeship of four years. Women were paid 6d. per 1000 in a class of work for which men were paid 8d. per 1000 ; but the men could be

put on to other work, such as jobbing, when wanted, and were, therefore, more useful. If women wanted to learn 'imposing,' he was quite sure that the men would object to teaching them, but they rarely showed any desire to learn the more skilled work."

Again, there is little inclination on the part of men to encourage women in seeking new fields of employment. Generally speaking, the attempt to enter upon any work where only men have been employed before is like besieging a fortified city; instead of being made easy, every possible difficulty is presented. Consequently, as even women must have at least a minimum of food and clothing, they press into what few industries are open to them, and are often driven by sheer hunger to offer their services for a "starvation" wage.

Combination might help them somewhat, but here again men are remiss, and for the most part rigorously exclude them from their unions. Their true policy, the wise and generous policy, would be to encourage the women in industries where they were underselling to qualify themselves to become members of the men's unions, working under the same conditions and earning the same wages. For women to have a union of their own in these industries would not answer the same purpose; it would be a new weapon in the hands of the employer if he could play off women's union against men's union.

There are really only two noble courses open to men in this matter. The first is, as in the case of their wives, to withdraw women from the industrial

field altogether by undertaking the responsibility of their maintenance entirely, and enabling them to devote themselves, at any rate for a time, to the important duties of domestic life. The second is, to abandon altogether their opposition to the industrial employment of those women who are *not* engaged in domestic duties, and to do all they can to make them really efficient workers. In doing so they will not only be deserving the gratitude of women, they will be increasing their own market, and advancing their own cause.

How can we make women (i.) stronger and (ii.) more efficient ?

Stronger, for our present purpose, means enjoying better health, for there is no need that women should be employed in industries requiring great muscular strength. To some extent, better health can only come with better earnings ; in so far, that is, as bad health is due to insufficient food and clothing. But very largely it is due also to injudicious feeding and thoroughly bad conditions of work. We need not take extreme cases, such as lead-poisoning, to illustrate this. The following extract, again from the Report on the Employment of Women, gives instances which are probably typical of almost every industry in which women are employed :

“ *Shop-assistants* : Half-an-hour is the usual time allowed for dinner, twenty or thirty minutes being the usual time allowed for tea. Shop-assistants are liable to interruptions during meals, and acquire a habit of ‘ bolting ’ their food in a remarkably short

time; one employer stated that his assistants nearly all finished their dinner in about ten minutes, and devoted the remaining twenty minutes to rest or amusement. Another employer stated that his assistants ate very little at meals, but were much addicted to eating sweet-stuff and pastry in the morning. Indigestion and anæmia are very common among the girls, and their hasty meals and short time for rest may fairly be assigned as the cause of their craving for unwholesome food. A physician with considerable experience among West End shop-assistants has drawn attention to the fact . . . that according as a business is conducted on a large scale, and the girls are placed under the direction of men instead of women, there is much greater hesitation in applying for leave to take necessary rest during temporary illness, and less willingness to grant it; serious injury to health arises in consequence. In shops where late hours are the custom on Saturday, but little time is allowed for supper, and in some cases girls do not sit down to supper till nearly midnight."

It hardly needs pointing out that the bad health arising in this way tells against their efficiency not only as wage-earners, but also as wives and mothers.

With regard to efficiency, so far as this does not depend upon health, it is a question of more or less skill, and more or less skill is a question of more or less training. This does not mean that any girl can learn to do any work, irrespective of her natural inclinations and ability, but simply that, generally speaking, efficiency depends upon training. Mr.

Schloss pointed this out some years ago in an article on "Women's Work and Wages."

"The constant relation between the length of probation, the degree of skill demanded, and the pay of the workers, will be seen to occur again and again in Mr. Lakeman's table of wages. Two weeks suffice to teach the making of a hearth-brush; the average earnings of the women in this trade are from 8s. to 10s. a week. You cannot learn to make a tooth-brush under two months; but then you can, when you know your business fairly well, make 12s. a week. The art of making hair-brushes demands an initiatory period of three months (during which the novice must be prepared to work without any pay whatever). However, the extra month of probation finds its reward in the prospect of average wages amounting to 10s. to 13s., that is to say, one shilling a week more than your mere tooth-brush-maker, and some three shillings more than the luckiest woman of average ability in the house-brush trade."

The connection between training and earnings which appears in these lower branches of industry holds good right through the higher branches; and we have here clear guidance as to how our women are to be made more efficient. It is a question for parents, more especially for fathers. Let them remember that at the best their daughters will be weaker to face the battle of life than their sons, and let them give at least as much care towards equipping them for that battle as they do to giving their sons "a fair start." Often enough it happens that when

a boy is properly set to learn his trade, his sister will be left to "find a little place" for herself, and she is expected to bring in 3s. or 4s. at once, instead of waiting to learn.

In choosing a trade for a girl, then, parents should be willing to wait six or twelve months, as the case may be, before expecting her to keep herself. Her whole future life may depend for its health and comfort upon her being allowed to train for work which will be fairly paid and carried on under healthy conditions.

But there is room for considerable judgment in choosing a trade apart from the question of earnings. *Season* trades should be avoided as far as possible. Trades, again, which are subject to great fluctuations in fashion, may be tempting by the high rate of wages to be earned, but may leave the worker stranded after a few years. And, most important of all, any merely mechanical work should be carefully avoided. The reason is plain. Mechanical work is that which can be done by machines, and human industry never descends so low as when it is competing with machinery, either present or prospective. Choose, then, something requiring brain-power as well as manual dexterity, and then the girl will not only be quite secure against the rivalry of machines, but will also be able to adapt herself to altered circumstances should fashions change.

This is what we can do for the girls who are starting in life. Can anything be done for the women who are already stranded—who are left as "heads of

families," and are not really heads at all, but only poor unskilled hands? The difficulties of training are of course greatly increased after they have passed girlhood; but what is there open to them without training?

In the first place there is the mangle, to which every London widow aspires. This needs capital, for a second-hand mangle costs £4 or £5, and a new one twice as much. Then a mangle is useless without a "connection"; and though this, like a doctor's practice, may be bought, few are the widows whose resources run to buying both mangle and connection. More often they trust to working up a connection by degrees, and if they succeed this generally involves the ruin of some other hard-working, half-starved woman.

Then there is scrubbing for institutions—hospitals or infirmaries. Few women can stand this for more than a year or two at the outside, for it is very heavy work, and the pay is only 7s. to 9s. a week.

Charing affords a living of a kind in wealthier quarters of the town, and has the advantage that the charwoman is probably well fed while actually at work. But in poorer quarters, where after all the mass of poor widows must live, it is of all livings the most precarious, and the most sought after by all incompetent women; except needlework, indeed, of the unskilled kind, which touches a still lower level, and means steady starvation. For here we have the most striking instance of the futility of endeavouring to vie in purely mechanical work with machines. Unless the needlewoman has learned sewing as an art, and

can do really beautiful work, she can only get employment now by working more cheaply than the machinist.

The only hope, then, for the majority of these widows is to get them trained, and, though difficult, it is not impossible. If they are not over, say, thirty-five years of age, and if they are fairly intelligent, there are still many openings for which they can be fitted, and the charitable worker could find no more profitable disposal of time and money than in seeking out these openings. What in each particular instance will be best must depend upon the situation and abilities of the woman; and it is useless to teach fine cooking to a woman in the East End, or laundry-work to a woman with a weak chest; but energy and intelligence will often be able to overcome these difficulties.

But no woman should be dependent upon charitable efforts to rescue her from misfortune. She should be armed beforehand to meet it when it comes, and this can only be ensured by recognising that it is as important for girls to receive a good industrial training as for boys.

## XIV

### LITTLE DRUDGES AND TROUBLESOME BOYS

WHAT becomes of all the girls after they leave school? I don't mean High School girls; you know all about them; but the thousands of girls who leave the Board schools every year. Very, very few ever go to college, or even know what college means. They can spell it, no doubt, and write it in the most wonderfully neat handwriting; and they can "do sums," including very puzzling problems in mental arithmetic. But most of them will have forgotten a good deal even of this in a year or two; you see, they leave school at fourteen, and fourteen, as you know, is a dreadful age for forgetting; and their stubby little fingers grow stiff with hard work, and their poor brains stupid with too little sleep, until they leave off using them for anything but reading the *Family Herald*. About hockey and tennis, and German and Latin, and algebra and Euclid, they never know anything at all, except the very few who mean to be pupil teachers. But what a number of things they can do! They can mind baby for six hours at a stretch without grumbling; they can scrub

the floor, and do all the marketing, and turn the mangle, and take the washing round, and even cook the dinner—after a fashion. Wouldn't the best thing be for them to help at home, then? Well, perhaps it would; but they have been doing that ever since they first toddled out at four years old to buy mother a "ha'porth o' blue" at the chandler's shop. Number two must do all the helping at home, now, in the spare times between school hours. "It's time Sarah Ann was bringing something in," says father, and mother promises to get her "a little place," and Sarah Ann feels very important and excited. What the little place will be depends partly upon how big she is. If she is small and weakly no one will give much for her, and she will probably be sent to a neighbour to drag about a strange baby almost as big as herself, all day long. For doing this she will get eighteenpence a week and her tea; and no doubt she will think she has earned it well! If she is a big strong girl, some one will take her as an errand-girl, and then she may earn as much as four or five shillings a week. But it is hard work; she must always be on the trot; bringing "work" from the City and taking it back when it is done; fetching tea for the workers, who cannot leave off long enough to get it for themselves; always at every one's beck and call, and very little time to sit down and rest. And running about *all* the time wears her boots out so fast (they are only made of layers of brown paper coloured over, to begin with), that nearly all her money seems to go in buying new ones, and then

father scolds ; and being out in all weathers she gets first hot, and then wet, and then cold, and never knows which she is going to be. Perhaps if she is bright, and her mistress kind, Sarah Ann will by degrees be taught to do the "work" herself, and then a new errand-girl will come. What is the work ? Making boxes at  $3\frac{1}{2}$ d. a dozen, or gentlemen's ties at about the same price, or curling feathers, or machining ; there are all sorts of work to be done, but whatever it may be, Sarah Ann will very seldom come to earn more than 7s. a week, and out of this she will be expected to pay at least 5s. to the family house-keeping. Or if she leaves home she will have to pay rent, and buy food and clothes, all out of about £18 a year. That Sarah Ann so often does this successfully shows, perhaps, that the mental arithmetic has not been altogether wasted.

But a very large number of them go into service, and turn up their funny little wisps of hair, and wear long frocks, and large coarse aprons like extinguishers. If they can be persuaded to do this they are quite rich, for they sometimes get 3s. or 4s. a week besides their food, so that they can spend it all on their hats. Such hats ! and such feathers in them ! But even the hats and feathers cannot always tempt them, for it is dreadfully hard work to be a "general," and do all the housework, when you are only fourteen. I remember a stumpy girl of about fifteen who washed, and scrubbed, and cooked, and did all the odd work for a family of five or six. The strange thing was, that though she was always

tired, she was quite contented: "Missis was very kind," she said, and "helped a lot." When "Missis" is not very kind, as too often happens, I am almost afraid to think what the poor little slavey's life must be like. I have just been seeing one who is lame. That is because when she was a little girl her father bought her a pair of boots which were too small for her, and broke her instep by dragging them on with a pair of pincers. As soon as the poor child left school, her married sister took her to be her "general," but as she did not want to pay her any wages, she called it "keeping her." All day long the girl was kept drudging—scrubbing, washing, minding baby, never allowed to rest for a minute; until her foot got so bad that she had to go to the hospital. Then it was arranged to send her down into the country for a long time, until she got strong, and a place could be found with a really kind mistress. But when the time came for her to go, there she was found, minding the baby or scrubbing the stairs: "Sister said she couldn't spare me," she explained quite patiently; "it's just my luck." To her astonishment, however, she found some one else could be as obstinate as "sister," and she is now seeing what the seaside is like for the first time in her life.

Poor little drudges! It is hard work and small pay, and not always enough to eat, and very often sharp words. If ever you come across one, try and make it easy for her, or at least to say something pleasant to her. If no one does this, it is only too likely that some day she will sicken of all the

drudgery, and run away from it in despair. Then she will get into terrible trouble, from which we shall find it very difficult, if not impossible, to help her.

And the boys, their brothers, what becomes of *them*? Of course they very seldom go to service; just here and there one will go as a page-boy and be very proud of his buttons, but he will probably be much better off than his sister who goes as a "general." For he will go to a house where there is plenty to eat, and where he certainly will not have to do *all* the work; and though the upper servants may tyrannise, he will manage to have a good time and get into plenty of mischief. Many more of them will go as office-boys, and if they can refrain from stealing the postage-stamps and be moderately intelligent, may in time reach the dignity of being clerks. Still more will become errand-boys. Considering how troublesome errand-boys are, it is wonderful how many of them are wanted. They are like postcards, so easy to send and so cheap, that every one likes to have one handy; and no doubt every one thinks that some day they will come across the ideal errand-boy who never forgets his message, or gets into bad company, or goes half-a-mile round to get into the next street. Unfortunately being an errand-boy does not always lead to anything better; and it is very bad for a boy to become a man not able to do anything but run errands, however well he may run them. It ought to be a condition that the errand-boy should in due time learn his master's trade, and have a chance of becoming a skilled workman.

But still worse off than the errand-boy is the boy who does nothing when he leaves school. Of course boys very seldom really do *nothing*; if they are not doing something useful they are probably getting into mischief; and so the boys who do not get to work, and over whom the schoolmaster no longer has any power, soon find occupation for their restless limbs and brains. First they lark about the streets in search of harmless fun; but there's not much harmless fun for boys in a town, and they quickly exhaust the possibilities of the streets. Then they fall in with some bigger boys, "get into bad company," and begin to learn all sorts of *harmful* fun. They learn to spend long hours sitting on walls, smoking bad cigarettes and using bad language, and feeling very "grown up." Then because of that law of nature that boys *can't* do nothing, they get up "faction fights," which means that the loafing boys of one district will manage to pick a quarrel with the loafing boys of another, and they will arm themselves with sticks and stones and old knives and pieces of iron and steel, and organise themselves into a war party. Then as dusk draws on both parties will sally out, and give chase to each other, and there will be a grand scrimmage, and the rougher girls will take part in it, cheering them on and giving them warning when the police show signs of taking an interest. And when it is over, the local doctors and the hospitals will be dressing mysterious wounds and stabs which the patient cannot account for, having no idea as to how he got them. And the next day

the exhausted combatants sit on walls again and devise new mischief.

And because of the other law of nature, which makes boys always hungry, and because all these boys have come to hate the very thought of work, they will have to find food some other way. So during the long hours of sitting on walls and loafing, they are learning all the many and interesting ways of stealing, and when dusk comes they will again go forth, not noisily this time, but stealthily. The bolder and more practised will even go by daylight to show their skill. And so our ex-schoolboy with nothing to do will learn how to pick pockets, how to snatch a pair of boots hanging at the shop-door, how to abstract parcels from the back of a cart, how to bully pennies out of small and frightened children who have been sent on errands, how to pass bad money, how to break open tills and pocket the contents, and so on until he is ripe for burglary. And many will learn this art without even the excuse of hunger, for feats which require daring and skill will always appeal to boys, and out of sheer emulation of each other and defiance of authority they will form themselves into bands of "Forty Thieves" to whom nothing is sacred. Think of a boy aged fourteen who is "convicted of stealing eight brooches, valued £15. Previously remanded for stealing apples; had been sent to a boys' home for robbing a chapel, and has lived by thieving and begging for four years."<sup>1</sup> So that the poor little chap began his

<sup>1</sup> Morrison, *Juvenile Offenders*.

career of crime at *ten years old*!—and many begin still earlier.

And so it comes to pass that the result of leaving boys to do nothing is, that in one year alone 12,611 boys under sixteen years of age were convicted of crime, and between sixteen and twenty-one years of age no fewer than 31,139.

The worst of it is that when crime is learned young and has become a habit it is *very* difficult to shake off. The young offender is sent to an industrial school, or a reformatory, or even a prison, and when he comes out again he may try to do better for a time; but the chances are he will fall in with his old companions—indeed they may be the only people who take any interest in him—and the old life will seem so natural and easy that he can hardly help drifting back into it. Mr. Morrison tells us that “at the present time at least 3000 homeless youths are annually discharged from the London prisons.” Being homeless, what are they to do but go back to their old haunts and old companions, and take up the old life until caught again and sent back to prison?

The time to save a boy is *before* he has learned evil; that is, generally speaking, just when he leaves school. Masters do a great deal in helping the boys to work, but they cannot do everything. Parents ought to see to it, but parents are apt to be either careless or too hard-worked to attend to the matter just at the right time. A school-visitor or manager might do very much by taking a list each term of

the boys who are likely to be neglected, and not losing sight of them until each one is suitably settled at work which will occupy his powers and lead to something. Or, again, for those who like cure better than prevention, what a splendid field of work to lie in wait for boys leaving prison or reformatory, and help them into safe surroundings and honest work!

But with many of our boys the difficulty begins even before the age when they should leave school. Of the 12,611 boys under sixteen who were convicted of crime, 2450 *were under* twelve. When one thinks of what a merry, chubby, innocently-wicked, and fascinatingly-troublesome creature a boy under twelve should be, it is heart-breaking to read of these 2000 offenders who are being dealt with by all the majesty of the law, instead of the tender discipline of home.

It generally begins with being "troublesome," and might be stopped at once by a firm hand. It is a lasting wonder to me to see how little power of discipline the parents of these children seem to have. Sometimes a great burly man will appear before a magistrate to complain that his son is "beyond parental control," and behold, the small sinner is a mite of six or seven whom he could almost put in his pocket! What does it mean? Very often it means the folly of the magistrate, who will send the child to an industrial school, instead of laughing at and reprimanding the father. And then this irresponsible parent will go and prepare another uncontrollable infant for the foolish magistrate to exercise his

powers upon, with the result that we have *over* 17,000 *children* in our industrial schools, many of whom would have done far better at home.

The cure does not lie in banishment from home life into some institution, even when accompanied by indiscriminate flogging, as some of our educational authorities seem to think. For small boys a little extra care and attention when the troublesome fit begins, such as they get now in Day Industrial Schools, will generally be quite sufficient; *if parents are encouraged to feel their responsibility* instead of being freed from it. For hardened delinquents, and those whose surroundings are hopelessly bad, stronger steps may be necessary. But for all alike we must remember that boys are by nature "troublesome," if by troublesome we mean restless and undisciplined, and that the only cure is occupation and discipline.

## XV

### AN APOLOGY FOR "FALSE STATEMENTS"

ONE of the things which always surprises me about other people is that they never seem to find any difficulty about speaking the truth. As a branch of being good, they regard it as purely a moral question, and repudiate sternly any attempt to soften the aspect of a breach of veracity as an attempt to break down the moral law. "To speak the truth is right, to speak an untruth is wrong, under any and all circumstances," runs their moral syllogism; "this man has spoken what is not true, therefore this man has done wrong."

Now, I am not going to raise here any of the casuistical questions as to the limitations of the duty of truth-speaking, nor to discuss the well-worn problem as to what you are to say when an assassin asks you where your father is. I am prepared to accept the duty, but maintain that by accepting it the problem is not yet solved; that truth is indeed an ideal towards which it is well to aim, but that it is one which we seldom attain to in our intercourse, and that the failure to attain to it is more often an intellectual than a moral failure.

To begin with a very old question—what *is* the truth? I don't mean any metaphysical abstraction by this; but simply, what do we mean by speaking the truth? There are three answers possible, each of which is sometimes given: "To speak the truth is to say what you think"; that is one answer, and very satisfactory until you come into collision with other people's thoughts. "To make your statements conform to facts" is another definition; a task which might stagger the boldest if he realised all that was contained in it. "To convey a correct impression to other people" is a third demand, not less difficult than the last. Is my morality to depend upon the degree of intelligence possessed by my audience? and if they are too dull to understand my plain statement, shall I have been guilty of unverity? And yet it is very evident that, unless this point is kept in view, language would easily degenerate into the means of disguising our thoughts.

Here, then, are three conditions to be fulfilled in a true statement: it must represent our own thoughts, it must conform to fact, and it must convey the right meaning to our hearers. A falsehood need not necessarily break all these conditions, but I imagine that no statement would, generally speaking, be accepted as true which deviated from any one of them.

Take the first. I have often such an almost insuperable difficulty in representing my own thoughts in sentences that I cannot help thinking that other people also have some difficulty. One so often seems

to have a thought which quite refuses to be caught and put into language, and which, when it finally takes shape, has quite changed its significance. This is the difficulty under which the mute inglorious Miltons suffered, and the Laird of Dumbiedikes. Some philosophers, indeed, hold the theory to be fallacious, and say that the people who think but cannot put their thoughts into language do not really think at all; but to those who are not gifted with the power of eloquence this view does not recommend itself.

For those who are so gifted, whose words flow to their command, another danger lies in wait. How about the numerous little exaggerations which go to make the point of a story more telling, or to heighten the picturesqueness of a description? It may be said that these are rather moral than intellectual deviations, but I do not think that this is by any means always so; there is frequently no deliberate misstatement, merely a looseness of expression, an uncultivated ear for the values of words, a careless habit of speaking, which has nothing really vicious about it, and might easily be eradicated, say, by a course of logic.

Our power of expressing ourselves can frequently only be tested by its effect upon other people. Every one must have felt at some time or other the mortification of having triumphantly struggled his thought into words perfectly satisfactory to himself and then finding that it conveyed no meaning to any one else. "Can you tell me what you think you meant by

that?" a very cautious thinker used to ask his pupils, and when you come to wonder what you think you meant the vagueness becomes hopeless.

But the failure of others to understand may not be due only to our inadequacy of expression; very often it arises from the perversity of words themselves, which will not convey the same meaning to every one. Differences of education, of rank, of occupation, and of prejudice may put difficulties in the way of real intercourse which are almost insuperable. A respectable elderly clergyman, with strong Conservative convictions, to whom a Radical means a man who frequents gambling clubs and gets drunk instead of going to church, asks me casually whether some one is a Radical. How can I stop before answering "yes" to explain that by Radical *I* mean a man who is impressed with the necessity of progress, and is determined that it shall not be obstructed by class interests? To introduce definitions into conversation would be a necessary step towards ensuring absolute truth-speaking; but, then, who would ever converse?

It may be said that, after all, this is a small matter, that the generality of words have fully accepted meanings, and are understood in the same sense by every one; like coins of the realm, they have received the stamp of authority, and pass current among all men for what they really are. But I am inclined to think that this is a mistake, that there is far more deviation than is generally recognised, and that if, like coins of the realm, our

words could be called in for a re-issue, many of them would be found woefully mutilated. Every individual collects his meanings from his own private experiences; and when we think how the experiences of individuals differ, the wonder is that we ever come to any mutual understanding at all. We don't take our meanings ready-made from the dictionary; we put them together bit by bit as we grow and see and ask questions; and, inasmuch as no two people ever have just the same experiences, or receive just the same answers to their questions, it is probable that no two people ever really understand one another, or are at all times able to communicate intelligently. This is why we so often dislike people whom we know only by what they say; we do not realise that to them their words have quite another meaning, and that statements which seem to us crude or conceited are to them the expression of very beautiful thoughts. I suppose no one ever entertains thoughts which are not to him of superior quality, so that if a real understanding could be established sympathy would everywhere take the place of criticism. But such an understanding is impossible, except under the sway of a Socialist Utopia, where every one is brought up on the same pattern and with the same experiences; and then, perhaps, we should no longer feel much interest in communication with our neighbours.

Finally comes the problem of making our statements conform to fact, and this is so difficult of solution that I wonder how any merely human being can ever think he has succeeded. Who is to be the

judge of what is, and what is not, fact? We have no dictionary of facts, as we have of dates, in which we can hunt up a statement and prove it to be correct. Nor, indeed, is a fact capable of being packed into a statement like boots into a portmanteau. It presents a different aspect to every beholder, and no one person can ever hope to see it in all its aspects, to grasp every characteristic, and reproduce the whole in one "true" statement. At the best we can only hope to make our statement conform to a tiny portion of the fact, and even that minute portion may have presented itself to us in such a way that no one else will recognise the truth of our description.

Take almost any event you please, and imagine it described by a child, by a man of the world, and by a scientific man. There will be little chance of the descriptions coinciding; you will get three distinct statements about a fact, all of them attempting to conform to it, and differing because of the different standpoint of the speaker. Can we say that the most scientific description is always the truest statement? I do not think so. No doubt that to the trained observer our ordinary descriptions of objects and events are miserably inadequate; but, on the other hand, scientific descriptions miss a truth which can only be conveyed in language which knows nothing of nomenclature and terminology. Take, for instance, an account of the geological formation of the Lake District. It is to one of Wordsworth's descriptions what the plaster-of-Paris model is to the real hills and valleys, rivers, and lakes, with the sunset glow upon

them, or the light mists softening every outline. How can we say which is the truer? Each has caught and reflected its own tiny possession in the living fact; and what that reflection may be depends upon the attitude of the individual, upon the angle of incidence.

Before deciding, then, whether a statement conforms or not to fact, we must ask what fact? whose fact is *the* fact? or is there such a thing as *a* fact at all? Does not the interest of the individual always determine what is or is not fact for him? and, if so, should not our zeal for truth lead us rather to reflect upon men's minds than to condemn their statements?

Suppose we are questioning an applicant in a Charity Organisation Office; we know how inevitably we elicit in the process what we are pleased to call false statements. And it is impossible that it should be otherwise from the very nature of the case. Putting aside mere personal deficiencies of want of sympathy on the one side, and inadequacy of expression on the other, there remains the insuperable obstacle that we are talking about wholly different matters. The fact which guides his statements, round which they all gather, and to which they all conform, is the very engrossing one that he wants help, wants it with an intensity which dominates all minor interests to a degree inconceivable to an outsider; and his one endeavour is to bring this fact as clearly before the mind of the hearer as it is before his own. We, meanwhile, have accepted that aspect of the fact (though probably inadequately), and are trying to

get at another which is absolutely uninteresting to our patient, which probably does not exist for him. Take such a question as this, which I imagine must be a fairly common one: "Have you ever been so badly off before?" We want to get at the cause; is it periodical or accidental? He has not even a glimpse of our drift, and sees only another opportunity of emphasising *his* fact, the uniqueness and intensity of his situation; while very likely the only difference between his present position and that of twelve months ago is the difference between present suffering and the mere recollection of past suffering, and every one knows what a difference that is.

Generally speaking, it is inevitable that where personal interests are called into play there should be conflict with such a careful and all-round statement as we are wont to call the "true facts of the case." The personal point of view can never be entirely that of science, even with highly-educated people; how, then, can we expect it of people who have never even realised that there is any other point of view than the personal; to whom facts have but one aspect, that which is felt by them at the present moment; and to whom every statement not conforming to that aspect is wholly irrelevant?

This insistence upon the one-sidedness of truth is at the root of all intolerance, whether of philanthropy or morality, politics or religion. It will never cease out of the land until we recognise, on the one hand, that other minds may be so placed as to catch a ray of light which is cut off from us, and, on the other,

that the great majority of so-called "false statements" are the expressions of an undeveloped intelligence rather than a low standard of morality. The mind which is capable of a deliberate falsehood is intellectually more developed than the majority of those which find their way into a C.O.S. Office, and it is hardly too much to say that our work would be more hopeful if genuine false statements were more common. Even the begging-letter writer generally believes in himself, and must consider the attitude of the C.O.S. a strangely perverted one.

To put the question in a wider form, is it not safe to assume that in a considerable number of cases opinions from which we differ require interpretation rather than refutation?

## XVI

### A HUNDRED YEARS AGO

It is always interesting, and may well be useful sometimes, to look back to our ancestors and consider how they lived and died, what problems were puzzling them and how they tried to solve them, and how far the present is what they expected it to be. Unfortunately it is not always easy to find materials from which to reconstruct the conditions under which men lived of old, and the inquirer is tempted to envy his descendants who will know all about our times from Mr. Booth.

But one great source of information we have in Sir Frederick Eden's *State of the Poor*, which was published early in 1797. The book has long been out of print, and is not quite easy to get, so it may be of interest to summarise some of the main points in the three quarto volumes.

The author explains that he was induced to undertake his inquiry by the difficulties which the labouring classes experienced from the high prices of provisions, clothing, and food in 1794 and 1795.

His plan was to get definite information, collected on the spot, concerning as many different parishes as

possible throughout the country. Some he visited himself, but to most he sent "a remarkably faithful and intelligent person; who has spent more than a year in travelling from place to place, for the express purpose of obtaining exact information, agreeably to a set of queries with which I furnished him."

In this way he collected details about 181 parishes, in reply to the queries, and as these are themselves of interest we may quote them here :

"Parish of ——

Extent and population ?

Number of houses that pay the house or window tax,  
distinguishing double tenements ?

Number of houses exempted ?

Occupations of parishioners, whether in agriculture,  
commerce, or manufacture ?

What manufactures ?

Price of provisions ?

Wages of labour ?

Rent of land, and land tax on the net rental ?

What sects of religion ?

Tithes, how taken ?

Number of inns or ale-houses ?

Farms, large or small ? What is the most useful  
tenure ? Principal articles of cultivation ?

Commons and waste lands ?

Number of acres enclosed (if easily attainable) in any  
of the last forty years ?

How are the poor maintained ? by farming them ? in  
houses of industry ? or otherwise ?

Houses of industry (if any)—their state ; numbers

therein ; annual mortality ; diet ; expenses and profit since their establishment ?

Number and state of Friendly Societies ?

How many of them have had their rules confirmed by magistrates ?

Usual diet of labourers.

Earnings and expenses of a labourer's family for a year : distinguishing the number and ages of the family, and the price and quantity of their articles of consumption.

Miscellaneous observations."

In addition to the picture thus obtained of the life of the poor, Eden gives a history of the labouring classes from the Conquest down to his own day ; and the latter part of this, in which he describes and discusses the many schemes propounded for the improvement of their condition, is especially valuable. It is clear that the air was as full of the question as it is now, and many of the suggestions were strikingly similar to those brought forward now. National pensions, compulsory insurance, subsidising of Friendly Societies, all kinds of schools of work, were offered by sanguine philanthropists as cures for poverty ; and many are the causes to which poverty is assigned. One writer, for instance, whose name has been lost, connects the increase in the poor's rates with the increase in Methodism, which "is a heavy task," and "encourages idleness" !

Eden himself keeps a wonderfully open mind during the inquiry, but in the Preface allows himself

to show that his own favourite panacea is the enclosure of waste and common lands. Strangely enough, as it seems to us now, he thinks that the facilitation of enclosure will really enable posterity to dispense with the Poor Law altogether. By turning the whole kingdom into a rich garden it will give abundance of work to every labourer for years to come; and by increasing the amount of food, encourage the increase of population—one of the chief aims of the statesmen of those days. We are apt, now that the thing is done, to think of the enclosure of the commons as a great injustice to the poor whose rights were annihilated. Eden argues that their advantages were apparent rather than real; “instead of sticking regularly to any such labour as might enable them to purchase good fuel, they waste their time . . . either in picking up a few dry sticks, or in grubbing up, on some bleak moor, a little furze or heath. Their starved pig or two, together with a few wandering goslings, besides involving them in perpetual altercations with their neighbours . . . are dearly paid for by the care and time and bought food which are necessary to rear them. . . . There are thousands and thousands of acres in the kingdom, now the sorry pasture of geese, hogs, asses, half-grown horses and half-starved cattle, which want but to be enclosed and taken care of, to be as rich and as valuable as any lands now in tillage.”

Well, the lands have been enclosed; but our poor are still with us, and the prospect of dispensing with the Poor Law is as remote as ever. It is only fair to

Eden to add, that he would have reserved in every township sufficient land to provide a "competent portion" for each family, and if this precaution had been observed his prophecy might have been nearer of fulfilment. But its failure has been mainly due to the extraordinary development of the country in a way quite unlooked for one hundred years ago, a development which has increased the population from about  $9\frac{1}{2}$  millions to 38 millions, and has brought about many changes in the circumstances and habits of the working-classes.

Look, for instance, at Eden's strange statement that the paupers are but rarely found amongst those employed in agriculture; and that "by far the greater part of inmates in workhouses consists of persons who have followed those occupations in which the highest wages are given." One wonders whether this points to greater instability in the highly paid occupations, or whether it merely indicates that wages (in certain directions) were rising faster than the labourer's standard, causing him in many cases to lose his balance and perish miserably.

Friendly Societies were a great topic of discussion a century ago, and it is interesting to find to what an extent they flourished. They were not, indeed, as we now know them, large and powerful institutions, federated or centralised, with branches all over the country, and including nearly all classes of workers. The societies of a century ago were small affairs, confining their operations to particular localities, and often including only members of particular trades,

being in this respect more like the trade unions of to-day. But their objects were—ostensibly at least—confined to those of the benefit club; and their number throughout the country was great. In 1793 an Act was passed recognising the existence of such societies, and providing relief from taxation and other encouragements; and we are told that within a very few years nearly 1000 societies were enrolled in Middlesex, and in other counties almost as many (*Encycl. Brit. Art. 'Friendly Societies'*). Perhaps one reason for their popularity may have been that members seem under the new Act to have been exempted from removal under the Poor Law. If we look at two or three towns at random, we find that Ealing, with a population of between 4000 and 5000, had nine societies; Newcastle had twenty-six, and Carlisle had six. One of the last is for women, and indeed women's societies seem to have flourished much more freely then than now. The rates of benefit were not high as compared with those of to-day, but we must bear in mind that wages also were much lower then. Taking one of the Carlisle societies as typical, we find 6s. a week allowed during illness, with apparently no time limit, and 6s. a week for life to members incapacitated by old age.

Eden's own opinion about the value of these institutions is very decided. "I cannot," he writes, "recollect any Act of the Legislature, for many years, that has either produced such important natural advantages, or been so popular as the institution and extension of Friendly Societies . . . Friendly Societies have now established, on the broad basis of

experience, one great and fundamental truth, of infinite national importance ; viz. that, with very few exceptions, the people in general, of all characters, and under all circumstances, with good management, are perfectly competent to their own maintenance . . . I do not find that any parish has ever been burdened with the maintenance of a member of any Friendly Society ; nor are the instances numerous, of families of members becoming burthensome.”

The success of the societies seems to have raised in many philanthropists and statesmen the desire to improve or supersede them. A Mr. Acland “proposes that there shall be established, by the authority of Parliament, throughout the whole kingdom of England, one general club or society, to which every male or female, between twenty-one and thirty years of age, shall be required to subscribe,” the rates of subscriptions rising with the income. The benefits are to include permanent allowances in old age, rising very rapidly as the recipient rises above seventy years of age. Mr. Gilbert would encourage Friendly Societies by occasional relief from the parish fund (*i.e.* Poor Law) ; and certain Agricultural Societies gave premiums to clubs which were formed in conformity with rules prescribed by them.

Eden himself fears the bad effect of any compulsion in the matter. “Few of us,” he says sagely, “will be driven, but most of us may be led.” He cites an Act passed in 1757, by which the paymasters of “coal-hewers working upon the Thames” were instructed to retain two shillings in the pound out of the men’s

earnings for a benefit fund; and another passed in 1792 "for establishing a permanent fund," by enforced contributions, "for skippers and keelmen" in Durham. He is convinced that Parliamentary regulation is dangerous, and thinks that the Acts already passed, although conferring substantial benefits, have created much alarm, and "have certainly annihilated many societies." Probably the intentions of the regulators were not always purely benevolent; by many, Friendly Societies were in those days regarded with great suspicion, and Eden only reflects the spirit of the times when he says, "I have indeed more than once heard it insinuated that Friendly Societies are apt to degenerate into Debating Clubs, and that convivial meetings on a Saturday night might become the aptest vehicles for disseminating principles subversive of subordination and submission to the laws of our country. I have also heard it asserted that the members of Friendly Societies, from being accustomed to meet at ale-houses, are not only stimulated by interested landlords, but encouraged by the contagion of ill examples in habits of drunkenness; that the money which is spent on a club-night is entirely lost to the labourer's family." But Eden regards these as remediable defects, and as counting for little in comparison with the positive value of the clubs. He has probably hit upon the real cause why the small local societies have disappeared in favour of our present system, when he points out that a member could not change his trade or parish without forfeiting future benefits from his society, so that they practically

acted in the same way as the settlement laws—*i.e.* they prevented men from seeking the best market for their labour. One society, indeed, he quotes, which by its simplicity avoids both this difficulty and the danger of embezzlement of “the chest.” It consists of about fifty members, and is called the Penny Society; there are no funds, but when a brother is confined to bed by sickness, every member pays him a penny weekly. Similar societies exist in London to-day.

In comparing the wages of a century ago with those of to-day, we have to bear in mind the great change in the relative prices of commodities. Prices varied also from one part of the country to another more than they now do; but taking Leeds as fairly representative, we find prices in that town ranging as follows: Oatmeal, 2s. 3d. the stone (present retail price about 1s. 9d.); flour, 2s. 3½d. to 2s. 4½d. the stone (normal price, 1s. 7d.); beef, 3½d. to 5d. the pound; mutton, 4½d; veal, 4½d; pork, 4d.; milk, 2d. the quart; butter, 11d. for 16 ounces; potatoes, 11d. the peck. Concerning the general diet of the people in this town, Eden writes: “Wheaten bread is generally used here; some is partly made of rye, and a few persons use oat bread. Animal food forms a considerable portion of the diet of labouring people; tea<sup>1</sup> is now the ordinary breakfast, more especially amongst women of every description.”

But the working population of Leeds, as of other manufacturing towns, enjoyed a much better diet than the mass of the people. The woollen manufacture was

<sup>1</sup> Tea is quoted elsewhere as costing 4s. the pound.

the staple industry, and weavers earned from 12s. to 18s. a week; and more when they worked by the piece. But they seemed to Eden to live extravagantly, and he laments that "amongst them, high wages are generally the forerunners of poverty." Unfortunately he gives no account of the hours of work; probably he might have found an explanation of the extravagance in the strain of factory life in those days.

Bricklayers and masons in the same town earned from 2s. 6d. to 3s. a day, and ordinary labourers from 9s. to 10s. 6d. a week. In Sheffield, cutlers earned from 10s. to 30s. In Manchester, cotton printers earned from 21s. to 40s. a week; but the average earnings of manufacturing labourers were about 16s. "But," adds Eden, "it is to be observed that they rarely work on Mondays, and that many of them keep holiday two or three days in the week." In North Shields, common labourers receive 12s. a week in summer, and 10s. in winter; masons, 15s. a week. (To show how prices varied we may note that flour in this place cost, "fine flour, 4s. 2d. the stone; second sort of flour, 3s. 11d. the stone," as against 2s. 4½d in Leeds.)

Of the wages of agricultural labourers it is difficult to get any general idea, for they vary so much—not merely from place to place, but from one season to another. For instance, at Rode, in Northampton, the wages are "in winter and spring, about 1s. a day, with breakfast and beer; in hay harvest, 10s. 6d. the week, with beer; in corn harvest, 40s. the month and board till it is concluded." According to Eden's

statistics they vary at different places from 6s. to 10s. a week, with a very varying amount of "diet" given in.

The women and children worked, but as a rule earned very little. At Banbury, "children and women in the manufactories earn about 3s. a week." At Manchester, in the cotton mills, "women earn from 6s. to 12s. a week. Children, of seven or eight years old, can earn 2s. a week; of nine or ten years, 4s. a week." In Sheffield "women follow many different employments; a few earn by spinning lint, about 6d. a day; washerwomen are paid 1s. a day and victuals." At Rode, "a servant-maid of twenty years of age has about £3 a year, in a farmer's service." "During the fruit season, a great many women are employed by the market gardeners in this parish (Ealing) in gathering and carrying fruit, pease, etc., to London. Their wages seldom exceed half of what men receive for the same work. A woman is only paid 6d. for carrying a very heavy basket of fruit from Ealing or Brentford to Covent Garden, near nine miles. They, however, sometimes make two trips in a day. Most of the women who are thus employed are Welsh." In Kent, a boy of ten years earns 6d. a day; at twelve, 9d.; at fourteen, 1s., rising to full wages, 2s. a day, at eighteen. Women earn from 8d. to 10d. in the fields; and "an industrious woman may earn 2s. 6d. or 3s. a day in picking hops."

Here is a summary of the "state of the poor" in a district of the East Riding of Yorkshire:

"Common wages, with diet, from Martinmas to

Lady Day, 5s. the week; from Lady Day to Midsummer, 16s.; from Midsummer to Michaelmas, 9s.; from Michaelmas to Martinmas, 6s. Common wages, without diet, 9s. the week in winter, and 12s. in summer. In harvest, men receive 12s. and 14s. the week, and victuals; and women 6s. and 7s. the week, with beer, but no meat. There is very constant employment in the winter. The labourers are, in general, supplied by their employers with corn, etc., much below the market price. The rents of cottages vary according to the quantity of land annexed; and are from £1 to £1:10s. Many of the cottages on this coast are miserable hovels; built of mud and straw. Such habitations are sometimes granted by the parish to poor families; and sometimes the parishes supply their poor inhabitants with fuel. Many cottagers cultivate potatoes in their garths or gardens; some have a pig, and a few keep cows."

But it is from the "family budgets" which Eden has collected that we get most details concerning the labourer's maintenance; and some of these are well worth quoting. Let us look first at one from Cumberland, as amongst the most prosperous.

The man is a miner, forty-five years of age; he has a wife and seven children, two of whom are boys, and five girls; the eldest girl is eighteen years old, the youngest one year. He earns on an average yearly, £26; and his wife and children occasionally wash ore, and earn yearly about £18, making a total of £44. His expenditure is as follows:—

House-rent	.	.	.	£3	0	0
Barley bread	.	.	.	5	10	0
Fuel (peat)	.	.	.	1	0	0
Milk	.	.	.	1	16	0
Butcher's meat	.	.	.	10	0	0
Potatoes	.	.	.	4	0	0
Oatmeal	.	.	.	4	0	0
Cheese	.	.	.	1	0	0
Tea and sugar	.	.	.	3	10	0
Butter	.	.	.	3	0	0
Soap, candles, etc.	.	.	.	2	0	0
Cloathing and incidentals	.	.	.	5	4	0
Total	.	.	.	£44	0	0

As a contrast to this fairly prosperous family we may take the account of two families in Banbury, where, Eden tells us, "the poor . . . appear to be in a very miserable state." In the first family the man is a widower, and works as a common labourer, at carting, digging, etc.; his earnings are 8s. a week for forty-eight weeks, and in one of the summer months 9s. a week, making a yearly total of £21. He has three children, for whom the parish allows him 2s. a week, bringing his income up to £26:4s. His expenditure is as follows:—

Bread	.	.	.	£13	13	0
Tea and sugar	.	.	.	2	10	0
Butter and lard	.	.	.	1	10	0
Beer and milk	.	.	.	1	0	0
Bacon and other meat	.	.	.	1	10	0
Soap, candles, etc.	.	.	.	0	15	0
House-rent	.	.	.	3	0	0
Coals	.	.	.	2	10	0
Shoes and shirts	.	.	.	3	0	0
Other cloaths, etc.	.	.	.	2	0	0
Total	.	.	.	£31	8	0

“In this account,” says the record, “the expenses exceed the income by £5:4s.; on inquiry it was found that the man was in debt between £3 and £4; and that his neighbours were very kind to him, and often supplied him with old cloaths, etc. . . . He has a garden of 160 square yards, on which he grows about three or four bushels of potatoes.”

In the second family, where the man has a wife and six children, two of the children earn, and the parish gives him 1s. a week “to support his lame daughter”; and the total income is thus £35:2s. His expenditure account is simple :

Bread	.	.	.	£27	6	0
House-rent	.	.	.	2	12	0
Fuel	.	.	.	2	12	0
Everything else	.	.	.	2	12	0
<hr/>						
Total	.	.	.	£35	2	0
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This expenditure was with bread at 1s. 2d. the half-peck loaf; in 1797 it stood at 1s. 10d. the loaf; and Eden points out that at this price the family must reduce their consumption of almost their only food considerably. Nor can they, he continues, substitute any other kind of food, such as “hasty pudding” (porridge), boiled milk and potatoes or barley bread, because of the difficulties of cooking. “The extreme dearness of fuel, in Oxfordshire, compels him to purchase his dinner at the baker’s; and from his unavoidable consumption of bread, he

has little left for cloaths, in a country where warm cloathing is most essentially wanted."

What strikes us at once about these budgets is, that almost the whole income is consumed at once in the barest necessities, leaving little or nothing to be laid out in that variety of food which has now become almost, if not quite, a necessity. It is the margin left, after the first essential outlay has been incurred, which makes the financial basis of a family broader and more secure. But in 1796 a labourer could obviously not retrench in bad times, for he was already at the lowest point. And yet it was generally thought that his only means of improving his position was to live more economically. Eden urges that: "To convince his employer that his wages ought to be raised, may require more eloquence than he is possessed of; but to make the wages which he receives more productive, depends on a few little frugal arrangements at home." Accordingly, a considerable part of his book is taken up with descriptions of various kinds of rye and oaten bread, and of substitutes for bread, and of receipts for cheap soups. Even bacon he is disposed to regard as an extravagance: "a labouring man, in the metropolis, who thinks he cannot afford milk, and therefore obliges his family to drink their tea in a very crude state, by way of economy, buys himself half-a-pound of fat bacon (at 10d. or 1s. the pound) for dinner. This creates such a thirst that he is fain to allay it with no inconsiderable quantity of porter."

Generally speaking, Eden's quiet and impartial investigations are very different from the declamations which we find in the *Farmer's Letters*,<sup>1</sup> against the so-called extravagance of the labourer; but both are severe on what was then called the vice of tea-drinking. The Farmer speaks of people that are "completely cloathed by the parish, and will let their cloaths drop in pieces, without being at the trouble and expense of ever *mending* them, at the very time they have every day drank their tea sweetened with nine-penny sugar." Again, he says: "As much superfluous money is expended on TEA and SUGAR, as would maintain four millions more of subjects in BREAD." The lowering of the tax upon this "vile superfluity," this "pernicious drug," merely enables them to drink it twice instead of once a day. What, then, we may ask, was the cost of this terrible luxury? "Now the duty is lowered, the entertainment of sipping tea costs the poor each time as follows: The tea  $\frac{3}{4}$ d., the sugar  $\frac{1}{2}$ d., the butter 1d., the fuel and wear of the tea equipage  $\frac{1}{4}$ d.: total,  $2\frac{1}{2}$ d. N.B.—This article in general costs much more, but sometimes we suppose the fire not made on purpose. . . . It is amazing how the people are tea-bibbers, and become as tenacious of drinking this infusion, as a mad dog to avoid drinking at all."

For the price of clothing we must revert to Eden. Here again he extols the economy of the north over the extravagance of the south. In the latter, working people buy from the shops, either new or cast-off

<sup>1</sup> See *Standard of Life*, p. 31.

clothing; in the former almost every article is spun, woven, and made at home. It is, however, acknowledged "that articles of cloathing can be purchased in the shops at a much lower price than those who make them at home can afford to sell them for; but that, in the wearing, those manufactured by private families are very superior both in warmth and durability.

His account of prices and clothing in Cumberland and London respectively may be quoted at length. In the former: "The usual price of a hat worn by labourers is about 2s. 6d.; a coat purchased (4 yards) costs about 2s. 6d. a yard; a waistcoat takes a yard and a half; a pair of leather breeches costs 3s. 6d.; labourers sometimes wear breeches of flannel or coloured cloth. A tailor charges 5s. for making a whole suit. A linen shirt takes  $3\frac{1}{4}$  yards, at 7d. a yard; this is strong and wears well. About 11 oz. of wool, at 8d. the pound, will make a pair of stockings. They are almost invariably spun and knit at home.

"Women's dress generally consists of a black stuff hat, of the price of 1s. 8d.; a linen bedgown (stamped with blue), mostly of home manufacture; this usually costs in the shop about 5s. 6d.; a cotton or linen neck-cloth, price about 1s. 6d.; coarse woollen stockings, home manufacture, value about 1s. 8d.; linen shift, home manufacture,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  yards, at 1s. 5d. the yard. Women generally wear stays, or rather boddices, of various prices. Their gowns are sometimes made of woollen stuff; 6 yards, at 1s. 6d. a

yard. The women, however, generally wear black silk hats and cotton gowns on Sundays and holidays."

"The following are the prices of cloaths, as sold in a slop-shop in the neighbourhood of London :—

	s.	d.
Men :—A good foul-weather coat (will last very well two years) . . . . .	13	0
A common waistcoat . . . . .	6	6
A pair of stout breeches (one year) . . . . .	3	9
Stockings, the pair . . . . .	1	10
A dowlas shirt . . . . .	4	6
A pair of strong shoes . . . . .	7	0
A hat (will last three years) . . . . .	2	6
Women :—A common stuff gown . . . . .	6	6
Linsey-woolsey petticoat . . . . .	4	6
A shift . . . . .	3	8
A pair of shoes . . . . .	3	9
Coarse apron . . . . .	1	0
Check apron . . . . .	2	0
A pair of stockings . . . . .	1	6
A hat, the cheapest sort (will last two years) . . . . .	1	8
Coloured neck-handkerchief . . . . .	1	0
A common cap . . . . .	0	10
Cheapest kind of cloak (will last two years) . . . . .	4	6
Pair of stays (will last six years) . . . . .	6	0

The chief economy which Eden urges in the way of dress, is the substitution of clogs for shoes. "The clogs, which will last two grown persons and four children a twelvemonth, do not cost more than 15s. or 16s.; whereas in Hertfordshire, it is not uncommon for a day-labourer, with a large family, to spend £3 a year in shoes." Those who know how miserably, and yet expensively, the poor Londoner

of to-day is often shod, will agree that in this point at least Eden was advocating a real improvement, and not a lowering of the standard.

Two points we may note here. First, that "the vice of tea-drinking" has, for good or for evil, become firmly established. It is a striking instance of how, when the working-class is fully determined that a commodity is desirable for them, they will persist in its use notwithstanding all opposition and expense, until they triumphantly add it to their list of necessities. With tea they have even succeeded in converting a vice into a virtue, for has not "tea-sipping" become a sign of the domestic and temperate man? In order to understand the outcry of the eighteenth century on the subject, we may note the following circumstances in the history of tea. Between 1780 and 1790 the duty on tea was lowered from 3s. 4d. to 7d. the lb.; and the consumption increased from 5 million lbs. to  $14\frac{1}{2}$  million lbs. Before the duty was lowered "a committee of the House of Commons discovered that 4 million lbs. of so-called tea were annually manufactured from sloe, liquorice, and ash leaves."<sup>1</sup> Secondly, we may note, not only that the labourer's margin of expenditure has become much greater, but also that he has a much greater variety of commodities upon which to spend it. The improvement is due largely to the fall in the price of the articles which he has selected to be his necessities. Meat, it is true, has risen in price; but the price of meat had little to do with the ordinary

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Denyer, *Economic Journal*, vol. iii. p. 35.

labourer of a century ago ; as we have seen it hardly entered into his expenditure at all. It is now, however, fast establishing itself as a necessary ; and we may hope that, as with bread and tea, its universal consumption will be accompanied by a great fall in price. The reconciliation of the people to foreign meat should not be much more difficult than their reconciliation to foreign corn.

If Eden had lived in our times, he would have been strong against the Sunday closing of museums and picture galleries. He expresses himself very strongly against the repression of pastimes :

“ Our laws against profaneness and immorality have, no doubt, very properly prohibited many cruel (if not otherwise improper) diversions on the Sabbath-day ; but they have not pointed out any other means of relaxation during those hours which (whatever might be the wish of the friends of religion) are not likely ever to be spent, altogether, either in public worship, or in private meditation. Out of mere spite . . . an Act was passed in the beginning of Charles the First’s reign, for putting down all sports and pastimes whatever on the Lord’s Day. Whether, however, this Act had been conducive to a more religious observance of the Sabbath may be much doubted. The only difference between the beginning of the last and the conclusion of the present century, in this respect, seems to be, that in the former the people attended bear-baitings, bull-baitings, and cock-matches : at present they spend their Sunday evenings at skittle-grounds and ale-houses. Piety and morality

seem to have gained little; though perhaps the revenue may have gained considerably by the change. It is worthy, too, of observation, that this day, of all others in the week, is in London the most productive of disorder and riot. On a Sunday night the streets of the metropolis are infested with drunken men; on a Monday morning the cages and watch-houses in the circumjacent villages are fully tenanted."

Concerning beggars in London, Eden quotes an estimate of the number in those classes which may be fairly comprehended under the term of beggars.

"Strangers out of work, who have wandered up to London in search of employment, and without recommendation, generally in consequence of some misdemeanour committed in the country, at all times above 1000.

"Strolling minstrels, ballad singers, showmen, trumpeters, and gypsies: 1500.

"Grubbers, gin-drinking women, and destitute boys and girls, wandering and prowling about the streets and bye-places after chips, nails, old metals, etc.: 2000.

"Common beggars and vagrants asking alms, supposing one to every two streets: 3000.

"Making a total of about 7500 beggars in London."

When we talk to-day of the slavery of the working-classes, we are well aware that we do so

metaphorically, and that we are using strong language for the sake of emphasis. But how many of us know that it is little more than a century since there were actual serfs, if not in England, yet in Great Britain? But the following statement by Eden is apparently quite correct :

“The working of mines seems to have been productive of more immediate hardship on the persons so employed than almost any other occupation whatsoever : it was therefore, in ancient times, the peculiar allotment of slaves : the reader will perhaps be surprised to be informed, that this state of servitude actually existed in this kingdom not longer than twelve years ago. It appears from the language of Legislature, that a miner, in the Northern parts of Great Britain, was as much transferable property as a *villein regardant* :

“Whereas, by the Statute Law of Scotland, as explained by the Judges of the Courts of Law there, many colliers and coal-bearers and salters are in a state of slavery and bondage, bound to the collieries and salt works, where they work for life, transferable with the collieries and salt works, when their original masters have no further use for them. . . .”

Before the passing of this Act, Mr. Pennant remarked that, in Scotland, thousands of our fellow-subjects were the property of their landlords, appurtenances to their estates, and to be transferable with them to any purchaser. He adds : “Multitudes of

colliers and salters are in this situation, who are bound to the spot for their lives : and even strangers, who come to settle there, are bound by the same cruel custom, unless they previously stipulate to the contrary. Should the poor people remove to another place, on a temporary cessation of the works, they are liable to be recalled at will, and constrained to return on severe penalties" (vol. i. p. 418).

For children, indeed, a state very near that of slavery, lasted even beyond Eden's time. The recent outcry against District Schools for the children who are under the care of the Poor Law marks an extraordinary change in public opinion since the time when the following description was possible :

"In the cotton mills (it would seem from Dr. Aikins' description of the country round Manchester) children of a very tender age are employed ; many of them collected from the workhouses in London and Westminster, and transported in crowds, as apprentices to masters, resident many hundred miles distant, where they serve, unknown, unprotected, and forgotten by those to whose care nature or the laws had consigned them. These children are usually too long confined to work in close rooms, often during the whole night ; the air they breathe, from the oil, etc., employed in the machinery, is injurious ; little regard is paid to their cleanliness ; and frequent changes from a warm and dense, to a cold and thin, atmosphere, are predisposing causes

to sickness and disability, and particularly to the epidemic fever, which so generally is to be met with in these factories. It is also much to be questioned, if society does not receive detriment from the *manner* in which children are thus employed during their early years. They are not generally strong to labour, or capable of pursuing any other branch of business, when the term of their apprenticeship expires.

“The females are wholly uninstructed in sewing, knitting, and other domestic affairs, requisite to make them notable and frugal wives and mothers. This is a very great misfortune to them and the public; as is sadly proved by a comparison of the families of labourers in industry, and those of manufacturers in general. In the former we meet with neatness, cleanliness, and comfort; in the latter with filth, rags, and poverty, although their wages may be nearly double to those of the husbandmen. It must be added, that the want of early religious instruction and example, and the numerous and indiscriminate association in these buildings, are very unfavourable to their future conduct in life.”

We will conclude our extracts from Eden with a short biography of a peasant woman of the poorest class, which could doubtless be matched by many a tale of our own times, and which indeed illustrates in a simple straightforward manner the heroism of working women of all times and ages:

“Anne Hurst was born at Witley, in Surrey:

there she lived the whole period of a long life, and there she died. As soon as she was thought able to work, she went to service; there, before she was twenty, she married James Strudwick; who, like her own father, was a day-labourer. With this husband she lived a prolific, hard-working, contented wife, somewhat more than fifty years. He worked more than threescore years on one farm; and his wages, summer and winter, were regularly a shilling a day. He never asked more, nor was ever offered less. They had between them seven children; and lived to see six daughters married, and three of them mothers of sixteen children; all of whom were brought up . . . to be day-labourers. Strudwick continued to work till within seven days of the day of his death: and at the age of fourscore, in 1787, he closed in peace a not inglorious life; for, to the day of his death, he never received a farthing in the way of parochial aid. His wife survived him about seven years; and though bent with age and infirmities, and little able to work, excepting as a weeder in a gentleman's garden, she also was too proud either to ask or receive any relief from her parish. For six or seven of the last years of her life she received 20s. a year from the person who favoured me with this account. . . . With all her virtue and all her merit, she yet was not much liked in her neighbourhood; people in affluence thought her haughty; and the paupers of the parish, seeing, as they could not help seeing, that her life was a reproach to theirs, aggravated all her little failings. Yet the worst they had to say of her was that she

was proud; which they said was manifested by the manner in which she buried her husband. Resolute, as she owned she was, to have the funeral, and everything that related to it, what she called decent, nothing could dissuade her from having handles to his coffin, and a plate on it mentioning his age. She was also charged with having behaved herself crossly and peevishly towards one of her sons-in-law, who was a mason; and went regularly, every Saturday evening, to the ale-house, as he said, *just to drink a pot of beer*. James Strudwick, in all his life, as she often told this ungracious son-in-law, never spent 5s. in any idleness; luckily (as she was sure to add) he had it not to spend. A more serious charge against her was, that, living to a great age, and but little able to work, she grew to be seriously afraid, that, at last, she might become chargeable to the parish (the heaviest in her estimation of all human calamities), and that, thus alarmed, she did suffer herself more than once, during the exacerbations of a fit of distempered despondency, peevishly (and perhaps petulantly) to exclaim that God Almighty, by suffering her to remain so long upon earth, seemed actually to have forgotten her."

## XVII

### TWO THOUSAND YEARS AGO<sup>1</sup>

#### A LESSON TO SOCIAL REFORMERS

GLAUCON the son of Ariston, desiring to be a leader in the city, began to speak in public before he was twenty years old, and amongst his friends and relatives none was able to restrain him from making a laughing-stock of himself and being dragged off the platform, except Socrates. He, meeting him, began in such a way as to induce him to listen, saying—"Well, Glaucon, I hear you intend to be a great man in our city?" "Yes, I do, Socrates," replied the other. "That's right," he said, "it's one of the best things a man can do; for if you succeed you will not only be able to do whatever you like yourself, but you will be in a position to help your friends, and to raise your family, and to increase the greatness of your country; and you will be renowned first in the city, and then throughout Greece, and perhaps even, like Themistocles, abroad; and wherever you may be you will always be a conspicuous person."

Hearing this, Glaucon was much flattered, and willingly stayed to listen, so Socrates went on—

<sup>1</sup> From Xenophon's *Memorabilia*.

"I suppose since you are going to be so famous you mean to be very useful to the city?"

"Of course."

"Come then, don't make a mystery about it; tell us where you will begin your reforms."

Glaucon hesitated, as if just beginning to consider what he would do first, and Socrates continued—

"I suppose if you wanted to exalt a friend's household, you would try to make him richer; shall you try to make the city richer?"

"Certainly."

"It will be richer if the sources of revenue are increased?"

"I should think so."

"Tell us then from what sources the revenues of the city are now derived, and how great they are; for you must have considered this, so as to be able to increase what are deficient, and to replace any which may have dropped out."

"Why no," said Glaucon, "I have not considered this."

"Well, if you have omitted this, tell us the expenses of the city; for you will want to cut off those which are superfluous."

"Indeed," he said, "I have not yet had time to look into this either."

"Ah, well," said Socrates, "we'll put off making the city richer; for how is it possible to look after her expenses and revenues unless you know what they are?"

"But, Socrates," said Glaucon, "it is possible to make the city richer at the expense of her enemies."

"Why, certainly, if we happen to be the stronger, but if we are weaker we should lose even what we have."

"No doubt."

"Then if you want to advise war you must know the strength of the city, and that of the hostile powers; and then if the city is stronger you may advise her to declare war, but if the enemy is stronger you may persuade her to let it be."

"Quite right."

"Come then, tell us first what is the strength of the city by land and by sea; and then the same of the other powers."

"Indeed," said Glaucon, "I am not in a position to tell you that out of my head."

"Never mind; if you have got it written down, go and fetch it, for we should so like to hear."

"But I've not even got it written down yet."

"Then we must refrain also from giving counsel about war," said Socrates; "perhaps the magnitude of these matters put you off undertaking them so early in your career. But I am sure you have been thinking about the defences of the country, and know how many of the forts are well placed or not, and how many are sufficiently garrisoned, and that you will advise us how to strengthen those which are well placed, and do away with those which are superfluous."

"I shall do away with all of them," said Glaucon, "for they are so badly garrisoned that the countryside is actually plundered."

"And if you take away the forts any one who likes will be able to plunder! But did you go and look into it yourself? or how did you know that they are all badly garrisoned?"

"I imagine it to be the case."

"Might it not be better here again," said Socrates, "to put off giving advice until we no longer imagine, but know?"

"Well, perhaps," said Glaucon.

"I suppose you have not been to the silver mines," resumed Socrates, "so as to be able to say why they are yielding less than they used to?"

"No, I have not been there."

"Why, no, indeed; the place is said to be unhealthy, and that will be quite sufficient excuse when you are called upon to speak about it."

"You are laughing at me," said Glaucon.

"One thing, at any rate, I am sure you have not neglected, and that is, how long the corn of the country suffices to feed the city, and how much it falls short in the year; so that the city may not run short without your being aware, but that you may know exactly what is necessary, and by your advice to the city may help and save it."

"You are making it out to be a tremendous affair," said Glaucon, "if I am to have to look after such things as these."

"Why," said Socrates, "no one would ever be

able to manage his own household properly, if he did not understand just what was needed, and if he were not careful to supply it. But since the city consists of more than ten thousand households, and it is a difficult matter to manage so many all together, why not try first to improve one, that of your uncle?—it needs it. And if you find you can do this, then you may try more; but if you cannot help one, how could you help many? just as if any one could not carry the weight of one talent, he would not even try to carry more.”

“I would certainly put my uncle’s house in order,” said Glaucon, “if he were willing to obey me.”

“Do you really think, then, that though you are unable to make your uncle obey you, you will be able to make all the Athenians, including your uncle, obey you? Take care, Glaucon, that in your eagerness for fame you do not get the opposite. Do you not see how dangerous it is for people to talk, and be busy about matters which they don’t understand? Think of others, whom you have known to say and to do things which they did not understand, and consider whether they met with praise or blame for those things, and whether they were admired or despised. Consider, too, those who know what they are saying and doing, and I think you will find that in all matters those who have the best repute, and are most looked up to, are amongst those who understand best; while the uninstructed have a bad name, and are despised. If, then, you desire to have a good

reputation, and to be looked up to in the city, try, as far as possible, to insist upon understanding what you are going to do ; for, if you excel in this before undertaking to manage the city, I should not wonder if you get what you want quite easily."

THE END



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